

Dual Citizens: 1 Peter 1:1-2
10/28/2018

We are starting a new series in the book of 1 Peter today so you can turn there in your Bibles (Pew bible number). If you don't own a Bible, take the copy in the pew in front of you, it's our gift to you. This will be a verse-by-verse series that we will slowly study over the Fall and Winter with a brake for Advent. But this will be our steady diet for a little while.

Read **1 Peter 1:1-2**

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²

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.

Before we get into the text, let's spend some time understanding the background.

Why 1 Peter? Well for one, we are a Bible-centered church, one of our core values actually and so we study the Bible, we are also an expositional church- just means that we believe the primary way to study the word of God is not just to pick our favorite topics, but to study books from beginning to end and address what we find...some may align with our thinking, feeling, and values...and some that will challenge us and call us to adjust to God's Word. We don't avoid topics here. But as I was praying over the last several months about the next book to study, I sensed God leading us to 1 Peter specifically for a number of reasons. While the whole Bible is relevant to us today...1 Peter is strikingly relevant as we look at the cultural climate and challenges that we find ourselves in today. Not just as we look to the culture out there in the world, but inside the church. 1 Peter is going to simultaneously encourage and comfort us and make us squirm in our seats...and squirm in the pulpit, as it calls out issues in our lives that we'd rather not address.

We are going to be addressing questions like:

1) Who are we? What or who defines our identity, worth, purpose and existence? And where do we find our identity, inside of us? Through our family or job? Our nationality? Or somewhere else?

2) As Christians, how much should we be like or unlike the world? We will wrestle with the tension of being in the world and yet called to be set apart from the world. What does that look like at school, in our church, at work, in our community and in our home?

3) How should we respond when we experience suffering of all kinds? Illness, loss...But also what if we suffer because of our faith? While we have enjoyed several centuries of freedom and prominence as Christians in America, that seems to be changing...We aren't currently being thrown in jail or thrown to the lions as countless thousands have in history and many areas of the world right now...but maybe you are becoming the increasing minority opinion and being

made fun of in your workplace or school. Maybe you are being ostracized or marginalized in academic circles. Maybe you are feeling the pressure to conform to popular opinions or values of the day that clearly go against God's Word. How do we respond? The Christians that Peter writes to were experiencing persecution and suffering for their faith far more than any of us. And what Peter is doing all throughout this book is saying, when you go into the furnace- you can either come out a cinder or pure gold. I want to show you how you can go through trials and make you something splendid.

Wow, all of that is in 3 pages in my Bible? Yes! And so much more...this is why we are going to go slowly.

Who Wrote it?

v.1 Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ.

An Apostle was a witness of Jesus Christ, chosen and authorized by Jesus to speak and be sent to the World, with his authority.

Most of us are at least somewhat familiar with this apostle, Peter. In fact, many of us...including myself can relate to Peter...he's kind of like an American in many ways. Assertive, loud-mouthed, likes to take charge, a fighter, takes a stand, independent... We can also relate to Peter because he's full of contradictions. He was the man that Jesus called The ROCK, he said forget Simon...that's what his name literally means. Sturdy, strong...and yet he's wavering. He was the first one to confess that Jesus was the Christ the son of God and the first one to deny him during his trial. He had more faith and more doubt than any disciple. The same one that says he is unworthy of Jesus is the same one who rebukes Jesus as if he was equal to him. The one who boldly stood up and preached in Jerusalem and 3000 came to know Jesus is the same one that was afraid of what the Jewish Christians would think so he stopped hanging around with the gentile Christians. A walking contradiction. And yet, God took a man full of contradictions and said- yup... you, I'm choosing you. That gives me encouragement because sometimes I can be a walking contradiction. I like to say that we are a glorious mess...we have the potential and ability to do glorious, wonderful things as those who bear the image of God and have the Holy Spirit working in them...and we have the ability to make a mess of things. We are not yet what we will one day be. So I'm encouraged when I see that God can use Peter...and I hope it encourages you because God does not choose the qualified. He qualifies the chosen. So if that has been your excuse for not getting involved in God's work you will have to find another one!

Now it seems clear that Peter wrote this letter if you take the Bible at face value, but some scholars have doubted that Peter wrote this letter and the main reason is that they would say, "Peter was an uneducated fisherman, he couldn't have written such a well put together letter" like what we will read. "It must have been someone who claimed to be Peter later." It's interesting because Peter has had that reaction to his words before. It's not the first time scholars have doubted Peter's abilities. Do you remember how the religious leaders in Jerusalem responded to Peter after hearing him preach? It says in Acts 4:13 "They perceived that they were uneducated, common men and they were astonished." Just like modern

scholars, these ancient scholars said, “How is this uneducated fishermen speaking so boldly and eloquently, using such powerful reasoning and having such a powerful effect on people?” Astonished.... But what are the next words? **“And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”** Ahh- here’s the key- How does an uneducated fisherman get so much knowledge? Think about it. Imagine spending three years under the daily teaching of Jesus Christ, in the synagogues, walking from Capernaum to Bethsaida to Jerusalem. Speaking of these locations, when we were in Israel I had a few people after hearing Dr. Lon Solomon preach say to me, I see where you get some of your preaching style, Nate... Spending 10 years under Lon’s leadership will do that to you. Well, Three years of intensive learning under Jesus would be like 100 years of education anywhere else. But this isn’t the only reason we can have confidence that Peter wrote this letter- Also, in Acts 4- you know what it says right before Peter preached? v.8 “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said...” This is exactly what Jesus said would happen to the disciples in Matthew 10:19. Don’t worry what you will say because the Spirit will give you the words to say. We believe the Bible is God’s Word, given through human authors, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So should we believe this was Peter, under the inspiration of the Spirit who wrote this letter? Yes, we should. And because of this we should read this not like we are reading a good book or commentary- This is God’s Word, it is supernatural and authoritative- It is FOR YOU today.

When was it written?

Well in July, 64AD- Rome burned. According to multiple historical sources, one key source- 1st century Roman Historian Tacitus said that Emperor Nero set the fire so that he could rebuild it more gloriously...psycho. And Tacitus tells us that as a scapegoat he found an easy target, the Christians, because they were already being persecuted as a religious minority. Listen to the kind of persecution. **Tacitus tells us- Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.**

Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

And there are many horrible stories like this as empire-wide persecution broke out against Christians. Why do I share this? Because Peter died in this persecution in Rome. Tradition tells us that he was crucified upside down because he didn’t consider himself worthy of Christ. So we know this letter was written before this widespread persecution. And the letter doesn’t read like that kind of persecution is happening, but rather that the smell of that is coming. **1 Peter 4:12 “Do not be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes upon you.”** So **Mid-60’s AD** is the time of the letter- **Peter is writing from Rome** “AKA Babylon”- code word as he says in 5:13. Just before this- v.12 we see that Peter is here with Silvanus, who likely penned the letter at Peter’s dictation and delivered the letter and who else is with him, Mark his son in the faith- the writer of the Gospel of Mark.

Who are the recipients?

v.1 To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Let me show you a map- This is Asia Minor- Modern Day Turkey. At the time of Peter this area was a vast geographical area with a few small cities few and far between, a vastly diversified population of indigenous people, Greek settlers and Roman colonists. There were many religions practiced...it was kind of like the wild west...and yet this sort of untamed region became the cradle of Christianity were many of names in the book of acts appear and as well as some of the greatest early church fathers were from.

So Peter is writing to Christians living in Asia Minor and Peter gives these Christians an interesting title- "Elect Exiles" This becomes a key identifier of these Christians throughout the letter so we need to understand what this means. First why does he call them exiles? Other versions may say "exiles of the diaspora or dispersion." What is he referring to? This would have been a clear reference to anyone who knew the history of the Jewish people when they were finally conquered in 586BC, and exiled, scattered throughout the Babylonian and Assyrian kingdoms- this was the word used- The Diaspora. Remember this? So when Peter uses this word are they actual exiles or does Peter mean this metaphorically? I take this to be metaphorical for several reasons that we don't have time to go into. But I will say that a common New Testament teaching is that Christians are strangers and aliens in the world. In many ways we are as Christians not really at home here are we? We are in that sense all exiles...and our true citizenship, as Paul says in Philippians 3:20, is in heaven. Regardless of whether they were actual resident aliens and exiles, or metaphorically so, all Christians experience the reality of Dual Citizenship, which is where we get the title of this series.

Our first citizenship is in heaven and our second citizenship is as an American (or whatever country you are from), for a Christian, as we will see, there is an infinite gap between the priorities of our citizenships. This becomes the dominant theme throughout Peter's letter, and the critical aspect of our identity as Christians. As we will see from 1 Peter: Our primary constitution must be the Bible not the U.S. Constitution as great as it may be, our first and primary King and Commander in Chief is Jesus Christ and not our President, and the dominant cravings of our heart must not be for the treasures and pleasures of the world but for the kingdom of God. Against my inclination, I'm going to hold off on developing that idea any further since these are introductory ideas for this series.

Peter also uses the word- Elect, Chosen, to describe these Christians. Now this is a controversial doctrine- Election. What is the relationship between man's free will to choose and God's sovereign election? Is this corporate election, God choosing a people or individual election, God choosing me and you? What about those who aren't chosen? Lots of unsettled questions with a lot of ink spilled over the centuries...But Peter doesn't take time to explain the inner workings of how God went about this...he just puts it out there- that's who you are- ELECT, CHOSEN. One of our idiosyncrasies in western culture is that we aren't comfortable with ambiguity, with nuance, with mystery. We like everything black and white, binary and explainable..You know when you are a kid and you would ask why over and over again to your parents until they

eventually just said, “because I said so.” And you would get frustrated... But then you become a parent and you totally understand why your parents said that. There are just things as a kid that they can’t understand yet and you can’t explain it to them...so your kids just have to learn to accept it and trust you as the parent. I think God gives us these experiences so that we would do that with him in the mysteries. Trust me with the mysteries- You will have endless AHA moments in eternity when he unfolds the mysteries to us. So do my choices matter? Can I choose to accept Jesus Christ? Yes. Did God choose me first and know my beginning before my end. Yes. Hold these realities in dynamic tension. Recommend- Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God.

Here’s what Peter tells us about our election to salvation, he uses three descriptors:

² *who have been chosen*

1) *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*

2) *through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,*

3) *to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood*

Notice first how Trinitarian our election is, all three members involved.

-God the Father has chosen us according to his sovereign plans of salvation before the foundation of the world.

-The Holy Spirit is the agent that is operative at the moment of our individual salvation- we are awakened by the Spirit who gives us eyes to see and comes to reside in us and work out our salvation. I heard the gospel a hundred times but when I was 18 all of a sudden it was like I heard it for the first time. I was awakened to my dire need for God’s grace in the gospel and became utterly aware of my sin before a holy God and saw Jesus for who he was. Many of you have similar kinds of experiences. This is the Holy Spirit at work in our election.

-And then he says our election is not just to do whatever we want, but that our election has a goal- Obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of his blood- In other words his shed blood for us saves us and calls us into a covenant. We are chosen for a purpose- obedience. Paul says it like this in Ephesians 2:10 “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for the purpose of good works prepared in advance to walk in.”

And so in summary- **Who are we?** What is our identity? We Chosen by God. Why does this matter? Remember the movie Toy Story? Still probably one of the best Disney movies ever made...Do you remember when Buzz begins to realize he is a toy and not an actual astronaut? He is so depressed. He loses all purpose and excitement in life. He has no sense of identity- of who he is or why he exists and he finds himself strapped to a rocket ready to explode because of evil Sid... Until he looks down and sees on the bottom of his boot- Andy’s name written in permanent marker. And he realizes in that moment that who he is has everything to do with whose he is. Friends- Until we understand whose we are, we will never understand who we are. We will look inside to try to find an identity, we will look to the world, our friends, our society...If we know Christ, Tattooed permanently on our hearts by the Holy Spirit are the words **Chosen by God!**