

Keep Moving: An Introduction

1 Peter 1:1-2; January 5, 2020

Introduction:

- It's a new year (2020 vision). It's a new decade. I love this time of year because it feels like no matter what happened last year, this is a new yer. You can have a fresh start. Even if you've failed your new year's resolutions already, let's make today a new day for you.
- In addition to being a new year and a new decade, we're also starting a new sermon series through 1 Peter called "Keep Moving."
- Question: Why should you care about the book of 1 Peter? What relevance does it have for your life?
 - How many of you are from Boston? Like, you'd say you grew up here.
 - How many of you are transplants? Like, you moved here from somewhere else.
 - I've lived here now almost 10 years (an entire decade), and I'm still an outsider. I go places and can't get 2-3 words out of my mouth until someone asks, "Where you are from?" I'm like, did I do something?"
 - But my experience is nothing like that of those who have come to Boston from another nation or as a refugee. I simply moved north 1,000 miles from NC. I didn't have to learn a new language (actually, I take that back). But for many, coming to Boston required learning a new language, learning new cultural customs, applying for visas, etc.
 - I now call Medford home. My family traveled back south over Christmas but we didn't go home. Medford is home.
- Here's the message of 1 Peter. Medford is not my home. As a result of being a child of God, I live in this country, but owe by my allegiance in another country. How do I live now in a way that reflects that this is not my home.

This is why we need 1 Peter. He was writing to encourage and challenge normal, everyday Christians, trying to live as followers of Jesus in a ungodly world. Today, we're just going to look at the first two verses of this book. But, what we find here are two key themes that will help us "keep moving" and live God-honoring lives in our city.

Read 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, 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. (1 Pet. 1:1-2 ESV)

Context:

- Anytime you start a new book, it's always a good idea to try to gain as much background knowledge about the book as possible. Things like the author, audience, occasion and purpose.

Who is the author?

- “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ”
- We first know him as Simon, a fisherman, whom Jesus calls to be one of his disciples (Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2). He was part of Jesus’ inner three (Peter, James and John). Later on in the Gospels, Peter confesses that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” and Jesus changes his name to Peter (Matt. 16:16-18). Jesus says, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18).
- Why does he mention that he’s an “apostle” of Jesus Christ?
 - His apostleship means that his letter comes with divine authority (cf. 2 Pet. 1:21; John 14:26). Peter wasn’t offering merely his personal opinion.
 - Sidebar: Three Criteria for Recognized the Books of the NT
 - Catholic: this word means *universal*. It had to be widely, if not universally, recognized by the churches as the Word of God.
 - Orthodox: It had to not be in contradiction to any recognized apostolic book or doctrine.
 - Apostolic: It had to be written by or tied closely to an apostle (an authorized eyewitness of Jesus).
- Further information about the context of Peter writing this letter is found in the conclusion: 1 Pet. 5:12-14

By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. (1 Pet. 5:12-14 ESV)

- Silvanus: he was a secretary who helped Peter compose the letter and potentially even deliver it.
- Mark: he was a co-laborer with Peter in Rome (cf. Col. 4:10; Philemon 24).
- Babylon: most believe that this refers to the church at “Rome,” where Peter wrote this letter from (probably between AD 62-63). Peter was martyred in Rome between AD 64-67.

Who is the audience?

- “...to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”
- Let’s explain what is easiest and then tackle these words “exile” and “dispersion.”
- “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” are Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) in an area north of the Taurus Mountains (display map).



- These territories had been impacted by Greco-Roman culture and had been under Roman control from the mid-first century BC.
- Our first inclination would be to assume that “Gentiles” primarily lived in these areas and so Peter was writing too Gentiles. But if this is the case, why does he use “exile” and “dispersion” language.
- What is an “exile”?
 - An exile is a person who was banished from his or her native land or someone who has had a prolonged separation from one’s home country by force of circumstances.
 - One of the main storylines of the OT is how Israel was *exiled* out of the Promised Land because of sin.
- The term “dispersion” is connected to this idea of exile.
 - This word literally means “scattered” but it was also used as a term to describe Jews who lived outside of Israel due to being scattered because of their sin (the exile).
- So is Peter writing to Jews living in these Roman provinces or is something else going on?
 - There are a number of verses in 1 Peter that give us a clue that Peter is writing to Gentiles (1:14, 18; 2:10; 4:3-4).
 - With this insight, it helps us to see that Peter is using the word “exile” metaphorically to teach an important theological lesson, one to which I’ll return to later.
- Given the above, 1 Peter seems to be a circular letter that would’ve been shared with

multiple church communities in the areas mentioned above. The order listed is probably the order in which the courier (possibly Silvanus) delivered it.

What is the occasion and purpose of the letter? In other words, why did Peter write this letter?

- One of the repeated themes that we'll see in this letter is that of the believers facing trials and suffering (see 1:6; 3:13-17; 4:12-19).
- This suffering doesn't seem to be the trials of ordinary life (sickness, poverty or death) but rather of persecution for being followers of Jesus.
- There were probably a number of recently converted Christians (1:3, 18-19, 22-23; 2:2) who had turned from the sinful practices of many in their families (see 4:3) and as a result they were facing criticism, being mocked and discriminated against. This persecution was a form of social pressure against the Christian community.
- How were they going to respond?
 - Fear (3:6, 14)? Anxiety (5:7)? Retaliate (2:23; 3:9)? Ashamed of their new faith (4:16)? Abandon their faith and return to their former lifestyle (1:14; 4:2-3)? This is surely what the devil wanted them to do (5:8-9).

Purpose: Peter writes to encourage these believers to remain faithful in the midst of suffering. How are they going to remain faithful? He reminds them of their identity bound up in two key words: elect exiles.

The Point: Keep moving as elect exiles.

I. Elect: You are God's Treasured Possession.

Peter begins with this term "elect" and then modifies it with a three-fold, trinitarian statement (Father, Spirit, Jesus Christ). What does these phrases mean and what was Peter trying to communicate?

What does it mean to be an "elect"?

- When we think about our salvation, we often think about our personal response to the truths of the gospel. That response is to repent and believe and then to go public with that inner faith through baptism. This answers that question: what must I do to be saved?
- But the doctrine of election is a way of looking at our salvation from God's perspective and affirming his sovereignty and initiation in salvation. Here's it is stated in our statement of faith:

Election is the gracious purpose of God, whereby He chose some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His sheer mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified. God's grace therefore excludes boasting and promotes humility (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:27-29; Eph. 1:4, 11).

- We first see election in the OT as it relates to Israel. Israel is God's chosen and elect people (Deut. 4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15; 14:2; Ps. 106:5; Isa. 14:1; 41:8-9; 43:20; 45:4; 51:2; 65:9, 15, 23).
- Now, in 1 Peter, he applies very similar language to the church (2:9-10).

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9-10 ESV)

- The church is the Israel of God, his chosen people, his treasured possession.

Peter further qualifies his teaching on election with three trinitarian phrases.

1. According to the Foreknowledge of God the Father

- Our didn't originate with ourselves, but with God. He foreknew us.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8:28-30 ESV)

- Salvation begins with God and he will be faithful to complete what he starts in each of our lives.
- How is this doctrine supposed to function in our lives?
 - You may face rejection and persecution in this world, but know this: the Creator of the universe, the king of all kings, has chosen you and set his covenantal affection upon you. Do not fear.

Sidebar: Questions about Election

- Some of us get uncomfortable talking about this doctrine.
- We can't be Waffle House theologians, just ignoring or lopping off verses or doctrines that don't fit our neat theological systems and constructs.

Why doesn't God save everyone?

"We can only know two things. First, the answer must have something to do with his perfect nature. He is perfectly loving and perfectly righteous, and neither can be preferred over the other or he wouldn't be God. Somehow the answer has to do with his being consistent with himself. Second, we cannot see the whole picture. Why? If we can conceive of a more merciful system of salvation than God has, we must not see it rightly, for God is more merciful than we can ever imagine. Indeed, when we finally see the whole plan and answer, we will not be able to find fault with it" (Tim Keller).

If election is true, why pray, evangelism or do anything at all?

J. I. Packer in his book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* says that God's sovereignty should affect our attitude in three ways:

- 1. It should make us bold.
 - "You and I will never write off anyone as hopeless and beyond the reach of God if we believe in the sovereignty of His grace" (Packer, 118-19).
- 2. It should make us patient.
 - "It should keep us from being daunted when we find that our evangelistic endeavors meet with no immediate response. God saves in His own time, and we ought not to suppose that He is in such a hurry as we are." (Packer, 119).
- 3. It should make us prayerful.
 - "The knowledge, then, that God is sovereign in grace, and that we are impotent to win souls, should make us pray, and keep us praying" (Packer, 122-23).

2. In the Sanctification of the Spirit

- To be "sanctified" means to be set apart, to be brought into the sphere of the holy.
- Another way to say this would be to say, "through the sanctifying work of the Spirit."
- Peter here is not using sanctification the way Paul normally uses it as referring to progressive sanctification; the progressive growth of holiness in our lives. The focus here is the work of the Spirit in conversion. When we become Christians, when we are saved, we "...become God's holy and set-apart people" (so Schreiner).

3. For Obedience to Jesus Christ and for Sprinkling with his Blood

- Finally, this phrase communicates the results/purpose of the foreknowing work of God and the sanctifying work of the Spirit.
- First, it leads to obedience to Jesus (cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26).
 - The theme of obedience is central to Peter's theology (see 1:14, 22).
 - The obedience being referred to here is the initial obedience to Jesus that leads to conversion.
 - "Conversion is not merely an intellectual acceptance of the gospel, nor is it faith with a blank slate. Conversion involves obedience and submission to the gospel, what Paul called the 'obedience of faith' (Rom. 1:5; 16:26)" (Thomas Schreiner).
- Second, it leads to Christ's work of cleansing and forgiveness through his blood.
 - The sprinkling language takes us to the OT and the sprinkling of blood that brings cleansing (cf. Exod. 24:3-8; Lev. 14:6-7; 16:15; Heb. 9:13; see also 1 Pet. 1:19).
 - Our sins must be forgiven and cleansed in order for us to stand in a right relation with God.
 - "The father foreknows, the Spirit sanctifies, and the Son cleanses." (Thomas Schreiner).

II. Exile: Heaven, Not Earth, is Your Home.

- I've mentioned already that Peter's audience is primarily a Gentile one and he uses *exile* terminology in a metaphorical sense to teach an important theological lesson. Well, here's the lesson:
- Since they are elected by God and God's treasured possession, their citizenship is in heaven rather than on earth.
- This is why the NAS translates this verse: "*to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout...*" (NAS)
 - An *alien* is someone who resides in one country but owes allegiance to another country.
 - They live in these Roman provinces but they owe their allegiance to God.
- One of the primary ways Peter encourages his readers is by reminding them that their circumstances are the same as those of their savior, Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus was chosen by God (2:4) and foreknown before the foundation of the world (1:20). But he also lived in the world as an exile. He was rejected and become a rock of stumbling and offense (2:6-8). He suffered unjust persecution.
 - When you face suffering and persecution, you're following in the footsteps of Jesus. As one author puts it, "You're joining your King in exile" (Evangelism as Exiles). Look to Jesus and follow his example.
 - One author asks, "Why would anyone want to sign up for this kind of life?"
 - He answers: "When we realize we're foreknown like Jesus when we realize our sufferings are like his, and when we realize Jesus's rejection and his cross weren't a mistaken dead end but the foreordained onramp to resurrection and glory, then our faith in God explodes with the hope of our own future glory (1:21). The logic of the apostle is simple: If we share now in Christ's sufferings, then we will share in his glory. This is the ground of Christian joy. A *living* hope. In a world of seemingly unending shame, opposition, struggle, weakness, affliction, and persecution, the certainty of future glory is the unstoppable heartbeat of our enduring hope" (Evangelism as Exiles).

Conclusion

- These two truths, elect exiles, have massive implications for how they were to live our lives and we as well.
 - Peter calls believers to imitate the holiness of God (1:15).

but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (1 Pet. 1:15 ESV)

- "The indicative of God's character contains within itself the imperative of their conduct" (NDBT).
- We should live not to reflect this kingdom, but God's kingdom. D. A. Carson calls this "piety under pressure."
- Peter calls believers to remain steadfast and patient through suffering, imitating Jesus.

- “Similarly the indicative of Christ’s innocence and non-retaliatory response to suffering (2:22-24) becomes an imperative for the community (2:21)” (NDBT).
- Act in accordance with your new identity. Keep moving as elect exiles.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Pet. 2:11-12 ESV)