

True Grace for Elect Exiles

1 Peter 1:1-2

Series: *True Grace - 1 Peter*

Introduction: Take your Bibles and join me in 1 Peter 1, 1 Peter chapter 1. President Trump has been nothing short of controversial from the very first day of his presidency. And one of his first acts was to impose a travel ban on people seeking to come to America from several Muslim majority countries. Whatever you think about the travel ban, you most certainly have been made aware of some of the plight of these refugees. From the pictures of the 5 year old Syrian boy washing up on a Turkish beach, to the accounts of families sleeping on the streets until they can make arrangements with a smuggler to get them to another country, to the news reports of countries torn into chaos by war and terrorism – these all point to the horrible existence of a political refugee. Torn from everything they know and are comfortable with and launched into a pilgrimage for the sake of saving their very lives. They find themselves paying exorbitant amounts for ridiculously dangerous travel to a land they do not know just so they can live to see another day. Once in that land they don't know the language, they can't find a job, they don't know the customs, they are often far from family, and they struggle to even find a place to live or food to eat. It is truly a hard row to hoe.

As we come to 1 Peter this morning we will see that this is our position in this world. Our calling and election by God to be his people have made us strangers and aliens – refugees – in this world. We belong to another kingdom and our journey in the worldly kingdoms becomes all the more difficult it seems with each passing day. It is here that we need true grace! You'll remember that this is why Peter is writing to these Christians – because he wants them to know and live in true grace, as he says in 5:12. Which means that this letter is going to be intensely practical and pastoral. He is going to be directing our hearts to the necessary ways of life as a Christian in this world. And to get to the practical he is going to jump in immediately to the theological deep end. He is going to teach us to swim by throwing us into the high water of deep theological truth. So, if the Word of God was a pool that we were all standing around, and there was a shallow end where you could wade in and slowly immerse yourself in the truth, and there was a deep end where you would find yourself treading through the deepest truths about God and His Word just to keep your head above water – then I would imagine that some of you would like to wade in slowly. You would be the type that have the floaties on your arms and you are happy to get in at your own pace. Others of you would like to take the ladder in at the middle of the pool. You're heading for the deep end, but you're not ready to just jump in. But then there are some of you who are on the diving board bouncing up and down waiting for the signal from the life guard. You can't wait to jump! Well – that's Peter in this letter. He gives us the necessary information

in his opening greeting, and with that he dives into the deep theological truths of the electing grace of God. So, some of you might feel like the kid who gets pushed in at the pool when you weren't suspecting it, but here we go – 1 Peter 1:1 says . . .

Before Peter instructs our hearts and commands our ways, he is going to inform us about our calling. As an apostle he is writing the apostolic message which has been given to Him by the Risen Christ and confirmed by signs and wonders. It is the message which is rooted in the Old Testament and finds its full fruition in the person and work of the Messiah – Jesus of Nazareth. As Peter writes this letter he is most likely in Rome, just a few years before he will himself give his life as a martyr for Christ. He is writing to several regions of Northern Turkey and each region most likely has many churches in it. Unlike Paul, he is not writing to one Church to address a particular problem they are uniquely facing. But rather he is writing to these Christians as representative of all Christians of all times. He identifies them as elect exiles of the Dispersion. The term elect is in reference to their relationship to God, and the term exile is descriptive of their horizontal relationship to this world, and the term Dispersion is referring to their relationship to their true citizenship in Heaven. In verse 2 he is going to explain more of what he means when he says that we are elect. We are elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctification of the Spirit, and for the obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. Those three prepositional phrases in verse 2 are defining what it means to be an elect person. He spends his time explaining that to us because it is our election by God which makes us exiles of the dispersion. We are strangers and exiles in this world only if we are elect of God. We are dispersed from our Heavenly Kingdom only if we have been made a citizen of that kingdom by the electing work of God.

This is really helpful because Peter is going to address the sufferings of those who are following Christ in this world. And at the outset he wants us to know that we are suffering because we are elect. We do not choose suffering, but suffering has chosen us in that God has chosen us in Christ. That is Peter's point as he begins. We suffer in this world as spiritual exiles and strangers because we have been chosen by the electing grace of God. Knowing this keeps us humbly longing for the multiplied grace and mercy which end the greeting. To say it another way – we must understand our calling so that we walk in true grace.

I. We Must Understand Our Calling

- a. The word used by Peter to describe our calling is the word “elect.” It is the Greek word *eklektos* which is a cousin word to the one for church *ekklesia* – or the ones who are called out. So the *eklektos* make up the *ekklesia*. The elect are called together to make up the church. This election is further described in verse two as being according to the Father, by the Spirit, and for the Son.
- b. *According to the Father*
 - i. Specifically, verse 2 says that we are the elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. So the choice God has made to elect us

unto Himself has been according to his foreknowledge. Now remember – I told you – Peter is diving into the deep end here. That doesn't mean it isn't understandable, it just means that these are the deep truths of Scripture. God the Father, according to His foreknowledge, has chosen unto himself those who will be saved.

- ii. Now listen, I know this is a controversial teaching of Scripture here. The doctrine of election in salvation is one of the hardest for us to swallow. In fact A.W. Pink, a theologian who staunchly held to the truth of this doctrine, said, “The only reason anybody believes in election is because he finds it taught in God's Word. No man or number of men ever originated this doctrine. Like the doctrine of eternal punishment, it conflicts with the dictates of the carnal mind and is repugnant to the sentiments of the unregenerate heart, and like the doctrine of the holy trinity and the miraculous birth of our Savior, the truth of election must be received with simple unquestioning faith.” The Scriptures are quite clear that God chooses some unto salvation. I don't want to spend a lot of time here because we need to look at foreknowledge, but just consider two texts about this:
 1. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.” (Eph. 1:3-4)
 2. “But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” (2 Thess. 2:13)
- iii. So, before the foundation of the world, God chose us – those of us who are in Christ by faith through grace – God chose us to be saved by Christ. That is what Peter means here when he calls them the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. But the real theological rub comes in on this idea of the foreknowledge of God. What does it mean that God has foreknowledge and that according to that foreknowledge he chose us unto himself to be saved? Well – the Greek word here is prognosis – you know that word. It identifies knowledge which comes before an event. Since we can't guarantee knowledge of future things we use the word now to speak of predicting or guessing about the future. Well, that is obviously not what is meant here when it is related to God. We all agree that His knowledge as God has to go beyond an educated guess about how future things are going to turn out – especially something as crucial as the salvation of souls from sin.

- iv. So, some would look at this idea of foreknowledge and say that God simply knows ahead of time what everyone everywhere is going to do in response to the proclamation of the Gospel message and from that knowledge he chooses those who will chose Him in faith. In other words, they would say that for God to choose us according to His foreknowledge means that he looked down the corridors of time and saw that when I was a young boy and the Gospel was proclaimed to me that I would respond positively to that Gospel in faith and be saved. Therefore, God chose me unto Himself before the foundation of the world based on his foreknowledge of my decision. But is that what Peter meant when he wrote this word? Is that what he intended for the original hearers to understand about their calling? That God elected us because He saw ahead of time that we would elect Him?
- v. Well, this word “foreknowledge” is only used one other time in the New Testament as a noun, and that is found in Acts 2. Turn there with me – Acts chapter 2. What is wonderful about this text is that it is Peter speaking. So, whatever Peter means in his letter which is written later in his life, most certainly he means the same thing here in Acts 2. So, in Acts 2 the Holy Spirit has come upon the apostles and they are speaking and proclaiming the Gospel in many different languages and quite a crowd gathers. Peter addresses the crowd to explain what is happening and to preach the Good News of Jesus as the Christ of the Old Testament. In verse 22 he says this, *read vs 22-23*.
- vi. So, Jesus is delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. Do you think that Peter means to say that God the Father looked ahead into the corridors of time and saw that Jesus would be killed and so he planned to have Him killed on a cross for our sins? Well, we know that is not what he means because he combines the idea of foreknowledge with the idea of definite planning, or as the King James says – the determinate counsel of God. So, this is not a reactionary thing – this foreknowledge. But rather, it is God’s definite planning – his determinate counsel. He determined to send Jesus at just the right time for the salvation of souls. He determined to deliver him over to the murderous hands of wicked men so that He could suffer in your place and mine and be offered as a sin offering on our behalf.
- vii. So, from Acts 2 we have to say that God’s foreknowledge is the same as his pre-determined plan and his fore-ordaining purposes. I said to you that this word “foreknowledge” is used only one other time outside of 1 Peter 1 as a noun, but on our way back to 1 Peter I want to detour through the book of Romans to show you two references where the word is used as a verb. Romans 8 and Romans 11. You most likely already know the text

in Romans 8. Verse 28 says this, *read 28-30*. This is a classic text in the struggle for rightly understanding this idea of God's foreknowledge as it relates to His electing us to salvation. This is obviously speaking of a subset of humanity, not all of humanity. It is those who love him in verse 28 – those who are called according to his purpose. So those whom he foreknew are an obvious subset of the rest of humanity. So, if God is God and He is omniscient, then he knows all things. So, if he knows all things then certainly He knows all people, and he knew all people and that they would do and be before He spoke one word of Creation. That is inherent in God being God. So, in what way does it make sense to say that God foreknew some when in reality God foreknew all, if our definition of foreknowledge is simply that God knew ahead of time, before He created?

- viii. Plus, those who are foreknown in verse 29 are then recipients of an escalated work of God – they are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, they are called, they are justified, and ultimately, they are glorified. So, if foreknowledge is simply God looking ahead and knowing all things, then wouldn't it seem like a logical necessity for God to have to predestine and call and justify and glorify all people, because he foreknew all people – if foreknowledge is simply a pre-knowledge.
- ix. This shows us that foreknowledge means something more. God does not simply look ahead and see what certain people would do and then chose them based on that. No, he foreknew certain people, the text says, not what certain people would do – and his foreknowledge of them bring them to his predestining work and his calling and his justifying and his glorifying. In other words – if he foreknows them – then he saves them completely, for all of eternity!
- x. Roll over a few pages to Romans 11:1-2. This is another occurrence of the word foreknowledge. *Read vs. 1-2*. God has foreknown – the same word as in Peter's letter – just the verb form here – God has foreknown the Jewish people. Paul is explaining the expanding work of God's grace to go beyond the Jews to the Gentiles, but he makes clear that God has not rejected His people – His chosen people – the Jews. Notice that foreknowledge and rejection are antonyms here. So, if God rejects his people then he is going back on his foreknowledge of them. How can that be true if foreknowledge is simply God looking down the corridors of time and seeing who would choose Him in faith? There is obviously more going on here with this idea of foreknowledge. This is a covenant making term. God has set his unique love and special favor upon a special and unique people – the Jewish people. His foreknowledge of them is another way of saying that he loved them beforehand and determined to set His love on them and keep His love on them.

- xi. Now, return to 1 Peter for one last spot where this word is used. Look at 1 Peter 1:20. Speaking of Christ it says that he was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God . . . God the Father foreknew Christ before the foundation of the world and sent him at just the right moment to accomplish the work of redemption. Beloved – this is obviously not God seeing ahead of time that Christ would be faithful and obedient to the point of the Cross. This is the Triune Godhead deciding in their pre-creation counsel how they were going to go about the work of redemption. The foreknowledge here is a fore-planning a fore-ordaining a pre-determinate plan and purposeful agenda by the Triune God.
 - xii. It is in this way that we are elect exiles. We are chosen by God according to his foreknowledge. His pre-determinate plan has brought about the work of Christ on our behalf and it has brought about our response of repentance and faith. He loved us before He ever spoke all things into existence. He determined to set his steadfast love upon all the elect – not because they would choose Him in faith, but because He is a gracious and glorious and awesome God!
- c. By the Spirit
- i. We are also called to God by the Spirit. More specifically, back in verse 2, by the sanctification of the Spirit. I know that the ESV uses the preposition “in” to identify location, but a better translation is “by” to identify agency. We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, and we are chosen by the sanctification of the Spirit. This work of the Spirit sanctifying the elect is a work which has a beginning a middle and an end. So, the Spirit initially works through the preaching of the Gospel to bring a soul that is dead to God through sin to life again. They are made holy, or sanctified, by the Spirit through their unity to Christ and His finished work on the Cross. Then the Spirit works throughout their life to sanctify their practice. This is the progressive side of sanctification where we are incrementally changed from one degree of conformity to Christ to another. And finally, the Spirit is instrumental in bringing us to have our practice match our position in Christ when he fully and finally sanctifies us in our glorification.
 - ii. All three aspects of our sanctification may be in view here, but most likely he has in mind the initial work of the Spirit to cause us to be born again. In fact, he will say that very thing in verse 3 – that the great mercy of God has caused us to be born again to a living hope. This is the Holy Spirit’s work in us, and this is the application of the election according to the foreknowledge of God. The Spirit is carrying out the divine purposes of the Triune Godhead as he works in space and time to bring about our

conversion – our initial sanctification. So, our election is by the sanctification of the Spirit.

d. For the Son

- i. It is also for the Son. This work of God's electing grace is for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. These two phrases are pointing us to the two sides of the same coin of conversion. The electing work of God the Father is worked out in us in our obedience to Jesus Christ and in our being sprinkled with the blood of Christ. God the Father chooses us according to his fore-ordained love and this is brought to us by the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God and this is for our obedience to Jesus Christ and for our sprinkling with His own blood.
- ii. You could understand this obedience to Jesus Christ as the ongoing lifestyle of obedience, or you could understand this as the obedience inherent in the moment of conversion. That is, I think, what Peter is referring to – that moment of conversion where we are brought from death to life and we obey the command of the Gospel to repent and believe in Jesus Christ and be saved.
- iii. We have such a tendency to dumb down the Gospel and to keep from the Gospel any hint of works because we know that one is saved from their sin only by the grace of God. So, we give the facts of the Gospel – that Jesus Christ lived the life of perfect obedience and that he suffered and died on the Cross in our place and that He rose again on the third day and that we must believe on Him in order to be saved from the eternal punishment of our sin. And our tendency here can be to call them to agree with the facts of the Gospel and if they do that, then to assure them that they are now a child of God and a recipient of grace. But saving faith is more than just knowing the points of the Gospel and saying that you agree with them. In fact, in the book of Romans – Paul uses the idea of obedience in association with saving faith.
 1. 1:4 – He says that he has been called to be an apostle to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of the name of Christ among the nations. This is obviously the conversion moment of so many that Paul preached to. He describes it as the obedience of faith.
 2. 10:16 – In the classic text on the spread of the Word through those who have been sent he is describing that we cannot call on God for salvation if we have never heard, and we cannot hear unless someone is sent to proclaim the good news to us. And then he says in verse 16 – “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’ So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.” Do

you see that faith and obedience are interchangeable there? Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ, but not all have obeyed this Gospel call. You see, inherent in the Gospel message itself is a call to repent of disobedience – to turn from being your own King, your own Lord. That is what sin is – it is a de-throning of God and enthroning of self. The Gospel is a call to turn from that and submit to this King who loved you so much that in the face of your rebellion He laid down His very life on the Cross of Calvary for you! If you reject that call and you continue on in your sinfulness, then you are not converted and you have not believed the Gospel – you have not obeyed the Gospel.

3. 15:18 – Paul says that he has been used by Christ to bring the Gentiles to obedience.
 4. 16:26 – Paul ends the letter with the same thought which started the letter – in a doxology extolling the gospel of Christ which has been made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.
- iv. You see, the Gospel commands and faith responds in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way someone responds with the obedience of faith is if someone has been called according to the foreknowledge of the Father and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Conversion enters them into a life of submissive obedience to their King as they, through faith, by grace, receive this new life found only in Christ. This will be really important because Peter is going to bring before us all kinds of ways that we must now continue to obey our Lord. In every section of verses we will find commands flowing out of this new union with our Lord.
- v. This obedience of faith is linked with the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. This is an obvious reference to the purifying work of Christ's blood shed on our behalf. In verse 19 he will remind us that we have been ransomed with the precious blood of Christ. Jesus' blood was shed as the spotless and perfect once for all Lamb of God slain for our sins. His blood cleanses us and purifies us before the sight of God. This also has covenantal overtones. So, at the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant in Exodus 24, Moses reads God's Law to them that he has just received from God on top of Mt. Sinai. And the people respond by saying they will do all that God has commanded. Then Moses sets up an altar and the people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and sprinkled it on the altar and half of the blood and sprinkled it on the people. They are cleansed from past sin and they are committing to future obedience.

- vi. This is a shadow of the Gospel of Jesus. Jesus' blood was shed and is sprinkled on those who believe in His Name. But instead of our obedience being the key to the ongoing blessing of the covenant – like it was in the Mosaic covenant – it is now the obedience of Christ which is the foundation of this blessing. Our obedience of faith is an outworking of this obedience of Christ which has already been accomplished on our behalf. In other words – we are not working to keep our salvation or to earn our salvation – our covenant blessing – but rather, Christ has worked and it is finished. We are sprinkled with His blood according to the foreknowledge of God and the sanctification of the Spirit.
- vii. We are blessed in the New Covenant which has been brought to us through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. And this is because we are elect exiles. God's sovereign grace has chosen us according to the foreknowledge of the Father. This sovereign grace has been brought to us by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. And this sovereign grace has brought us to the obedience of faith and to the cleansing work made available through the shed blood of the Son. Notice the Triune work of God here. The Father chooses, the Spirit applies, and the Son accomplishes our redemption.

II. So that We Walk in True Grace

- a. So, why does all of this matter? Why do you need to know the reality of your calling by God? Why is it important to understand the work of grace that has brought you from spiritual death to spiritual life? Well, it matters because your life is now going to be difficult because of this sovereign grace. This conversion – this being born again in Christ makes you an exile in this world. The only other place that this word “exile” is used in Peter's letter – and in the whole NT for that matter – is in 2:11 where he says, “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.”
- b. In other words, because you are elect, you will suffer. You will suffer the war that your own flesh will wage against you as it seeks to call you constantly to walk according to its passions and lusts. And you will suffer the reviling and the despising of the people of the world. We need to know our election so that we can understand our suffering.
- c. But we also need to know our election so that we can be all the more intent on walking in the true grace of Christ. Our tendency as spiritual refugees is to either completely assimilate or to completely withdraw. In other words, we are prone to just live as though we are citizens of this world rather than as strange citizens of another. Or we are prone to completely disengage those around us and cloister in

a holy huddle and seek the asylum of hiding our light under a bushel. Peter's letter is going to call us to abandon both of those responses as we seek to grow in the true grace of Christ.

Conclusion: Beloved, if you are in Christ by grace through faith, then you need this multiplied grace and peace brought to you on a constant basis. Peter ends his greeting by saying – may grace and peace be multiplied to you. This is not just a standard – “hey, how are you?” kind of greeting. Rather it is his hope for this letter in the heart of believers. He desires for true grace and true peace to be multiplied to those who hear and heed this Word from the Lord. As we close, let me bring this home to your heart Christian. How would you know if you are walking in this true grace in light of your calling by God? Well, let me give you some quick indicators which might point to you living more as a citizen of earth than as an elect exile who needs multiplied grace and peace.

- You need to return to your calling as an elect exile if you are more concerned and upset by football players kneeling during the National Anthem than you are with the fact that your friends and neighbors and relatives are refusing to bow the knee to Jesus Christ.
- You need to return to your calling as an elect exile if you are more afraid of how other people's sin is affecting your life than you are about having to answer to the One who impartially judges all men's deeds.
- You need to return to your calling as an elect exile if you are more offended and disgusted by people's lack of love toward you in the body of Christ than you are intent on showing that brotherly love earnestly from a pure heart.
- You need to return to your calling as an elect exile if you have lost your appetite for the pure spiritual milk of the Word and find yourself delighting in all kinds of junk food which bring momentary satisfaction but no long-term health.
- You need to return to your calling as an elect exile if you are plotting your revenge against those who have mistreated you, rather than entrusting yourself to the shepherd and overseer of your soul.
- You need to return to your calling as an elect exile if you are floundering in the flood of human passions which have overcome your soul rather than walking in the purity of true grace.
- You need to return to your calling as an elect exile if you lost your desire to pray to the God of Heaven rather than being sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

Beloved – this is all of us! We all need this multiplied grace and peace so that we might all the more walk in accordance with our calling in true grace! Let's pray.