

Life Link

Countdown:

Music Video: "I Am Free"

Sermon Video Illustration: "Who Am I"

Sermon Title: "Who Are You?"

Today we begin a new series of messages from the New Testament book of 1 Peter. Please find 1 Peter in your Bible. If you go to the last book, Revelation, and then work backwards, you will see there are several small books just before Revelation: Jude, 1-2-3 John, 2 Peter, and then 1 Peter. Just as Paul has been called the "Apostle of Faith" because that is the dominant theme of his writings and John has been called the "Apostle of Love" for a similar reason, Peter has been called "the Apostle of Hope," because hope is the overwhelming theme of his two books.

What are we talking about when we use that word "hope?" When people speak of hope in our daily lives, there is an element of uncertainty about it. What we "hope" may or may not be based on reality. I hope the Cowboys win the Superbowl this year. I hope the Texas Rangers win the World Series next year (probably not much NO HOPE there).

There is a difference between that kind of hope and the hope that is mentioned in the Bible. When the Bible speaks of hope, it is confident expectation based upon the realities of the person of Christ and promises of God. Those who know Jesus Christ have a blessed hope for the future. It is a certain anticipation. It is hope which brings the promises of God into our present day experiences, and by faith we put our confidence on these wonderful promises that God has given to us.

We'll have much more to say about hope as we journey through 1 Peter. This book is actually a letter and verses 1 & 2 of Chapter 1 are the salutation of the letter. In our culture salutations simply identify the recipient of the letter: "Dear So-and-So." In New Testament times, however, it was common for the salutation to identify both the sender and the recipients. Peter goes a step farther than just saying "From Peter to Christians." He uses the salutation to make several important statements about who both he and his recipients are as believers in Christ.

Just knowing who we are in Christ can be a tremendous source of encouragement and hope.

Charlie Waters and Cliff Harris, both great players for the Dallas Cowboys in the Tom Landry era, a few years back wrote a book together on their favorite memories from their days with America's Team. They told the story of one game where concussion prone quarterback Roger Staubach had taken another "slobberknocker" hit and had left the field in a rubber-legged daze. Coach Tom Landry met him on the sideline to check on his condition. He asked him some basic questions.

Landry: "Son, do you know who I am?"

Staubach: "Yes, you're Coach Tom Landry."

Landry: "Son, do you know where you are?"

Staubach: "Yes, we're at Texas Stadium."

Landry: "Son, do you know who you are?"

Staubach: "No, I don't have any idea."

Introduction: The folks that Peter is writing to had taken some pretty hard “slobberknocker” hits along the way and were entering into an era where persecution was widespread. This letter was probably written sometime around 63-64 AD, during the cruel reign of Emperor Nero. Peter’s purpose was to provide hope and encouragement to Christians going through a “fiery trial” (1 Peter 4:12) of persecution. From the get-go in the salutation of this letter he starts encouraging them by reminding them of who they are in Christ.

Today we begin a new series of messages from the New Testament book of 1 Peter. Please find 1 Peter in your Bible. Peter has been called “the Apostle of Hope,” because hope is the overwhelming theme of his two books in the New Testament.

We’ll have much more to say about hope as we journey through 1 Peter. This book is actually a letter, and verses 1 & 2 of Chapter 1 are the salutation of the letter. In our culture salutations simply identify the recipient of the letter: “Dear So-and-So.” In New Testament times, however, it was common for the salutation to identify both the sender and the recipients. Peter goes a step farther than just saying “From Peter to Christians.” He uses the salutation to make several important statements about who his recipients are as believers in Christ. Just knowing who we are in Christ can be a tremendous source of encouragement and hope. Today we will discuss

- (I.) We are Pilgrims,
- (II.) Placed According to God’s Plan,
- (III.) For God’s Purposes

Text: 1 Peter 1:1-2 (NKJV) (Greeting to the Elect Pilgrims)

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

1 Peter 1:1-2 I, (The Message) Peter, am an apostle on assignment by Jesus, the Messiah, writing to exiles scattered to the four winds. Not one is missing, not one forgotten. 2 God the Father has his eye on each of you, and has determined by the work of the Spirit to keep you obedient through the sacrifice of Jesus. May everything good from God be yours!

(from THE MESSAGE: The Bible in Contemporary Language © 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved.)

Illustration

When I was a small child we lived in a house that had one land-line phone in the hall-way. As soon as we were big enough to walk, my brother and I would race to answer the phone every time it would ring. The problem was that we were so small that we didn’t know what to say when we answered it. So we usually say "hello" and ask the same two questions: “Who are you?” and “What are you?” At this point our mom would arrive from another part of the house and, with an anxious expression, jerk the receiver from our hands. Our parents soon told us not to answer the phone anymore, but we kept doing it anyway. And we kept asking our two questions: (1) “Who are you?” and (2) “What are you?” After all, they are important questions. (Jim Gatliff, Associational Missionary HBA.)

In these first two verses of 1 Peter 1, Peter answers those two questions for all believers or all ages.

I. We are Pilgrims,

“To the pilgrims” (v. 1)

“Pilgrims,” is actually the key word in verses 1 & 2. Most phrases of these two verses describe that one word. Pilgrims are persons who belong to some other land and people who are temporarily residing with people to whom they do not belong. “Aliens,” “exiles,” “strangers,” or “sojourners” are used by some translations. It also conveys the idea of people in a temporary residence who are “just passin’ through.” Aliens in ancient times were often held in contempt by those among whom they lived and endured great injustice and many hardships. They were outsiders.

Certainly we can identify with these “pilgrims.” Most of us have been strangers, exiles, aliens, of some sort, at times in our lives. Some of you may have moved from town to town as kids. Do you remember how every time that you landed somewhere, you automatically became an outsider (again). Being an outsider can make you change in personality and character, just so you can fit in. For example, when you get around tough and rumble type people, you might become tough and rumble as well. You learn as a stranger, to adapt, to change your appearance, your speech, your clothes, your hair style. Often times, when you go into a new area, a new school, a new job, or even a new church you may not know just what you are walking into. And sometimes you can get disoriented on the journey.

An article about the world’s largest corn maze at Cool Patch Pumpkins in Dixon, California. According to the owner of the maze Matt Cooley, many of the visitors to the 63-acre maze have gotten lost in the maze for many hours, and several have called 911 to get someone to rescue them. According to Cooley, “When it is dark, all you see is corn.”

On our pilgrimage through the maze of this dark world, sometime everything we see are barriers, problems, and crises.

Because of our relationship with God, we are all aliens and strangers in this world. Christians live in the world but are no longer of the world. Like the old hymn says, “This world is not my home. I’m just a passing through.” Hebrews 11:9-16 gives us the example of Abraham, who, “By faith . . . dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country. . . .For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” David wrote in Ps. 39:12, “For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner, as all my fathers were.” We should all treat the world as we are aliens or from another country on a mission to our heavenly home. We’re to be like E.T. trying to get home: In everything he does, he works on getting home.

And here’s where our relationship to God comes in. Although we may be outsiders, just pilgrims through this world, we are a part of God’s Kingdom and a member of God’s family. In Ephesians 2:19 Paul writes, “You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” In Philippians 3:20 he states, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ makes outsiders insiders.

II. We are Pilgrims, Placed According to God's Plan

"Of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . . elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (v. 1-2)

The term "Dispersion" as we read it in verse 1 originally referred to Jewish people who were scattered throughout the world after the conquering of Israel, particularly by the Babylonians. The term later included any scattering of Jewish people beyond the borders of Israel. The word dispersion is translated from the original language of the NT from the word diaspora. The first part – "dia" means through. Then the second part of that word, "spora," means seed. Thus, diaspora means to scatter seed around. Peter borrows the term and applies it to the Christian community of Asia Minor. Among Peter's readers may have been people from the region mentioned in Acts 2:9-11 who experienced the dramatic events of Pentecost. Some might have been Jewish Christians who were scattered by persecution mentioned in Acts 8:1. There may have been others who were pagans converted through the ministries of Peter, Paul and other unnamed missionaries who had been displaced from their homes and families because of local persecution. As Peter wrote this letter, persecution at the hands of Nero was beginning to sweep across the Roman Empire. So, in reality, his readers could have come from just about anywhere in the civilized world. One of the things they held in common was that they had been scattered from their home of origin.

Peter's original readers had been scattered throughout a fairly large area. Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia were provinces or regions of the Roman Empire in Asia Minor, encompassing over 300,000 square miles, or most of present day Turkey. To put that in perspective, that's an area almost the size of the State of Texas.

Peter, however, states that these scattered pilgrims were "Elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. "Elected" means simply "chosen." Peter is probably not trying to present the full doctrine of election here. He was simply reminding some displaced people that God had chosen them and that their present journey was not just an accident, but a part of God's eternal plan

· "Foreknowledge" as a noun is found only one other time, **Acts 2:23**, in the NT, though the verb form is found in a few great verses like **Rom. 8:28**. Peter's description is rooted in God's knowledge of all things, and in particular his intimate knowledge of us. **Psalms 1:6** says, "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous. Jesus stated in John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. In **2 Timothy 2:19** Paul says, "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" (**Ps. 1, Amos 3:2, Matt 7:23, John 10:14, 2 Tim. 2:19**). "Fore" simply dates when he knows (before). God eternally knows us and all things about us. Just as we find comfort in the fact that God has chosen us as pilgrims, we can also find encouragement in the fact that he has mapped out our pilgrimage through life based on his infinite eternal knowledge of all things according to his great eternal plan.

Ultimately the scattering of the church has been used by God to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Paul notes in **Philippians 1:12** how his own perilous circumstances and personal displacement "have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."

Illustration: Church historian Kenneth Latourette suggested that the Gospel had spread throughout the Roman Empire and that churches had been planted in at least 300 towns and cities

by the end of the First Century. Most church historians would concur with this conservative estimate. Certainly the scattering of Christians contributed to what one writer has described as the “explosive and spontaneous expansion of the church” in the New Testament era.

This, however, should not surprise us because God's kingdom is not geographic. There are no national boundaries. There are no territorial lines. God's subjects, as Peter suggests in **1 Peter 2:9** are citizens of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." God's Kingdom is not defined by national interests, nationalism, or flags. This is not to say that each believer is not a citizen of his or her respective nation (**1 Peter 2:13-16, Romans 13:1-7**), but it is to say that every believer, regardless of nationality is included and bound together in the body of Christ. Because God's kingdom is not defined by geography, there is no place that the gospel should not go. As we are scattered, always in accordance to God's master plan, we serve as God's witnesses to world.

The 21st Century world regularly displaces people. United Nations estimates that there are currently 15.4 million people worldwide who have been driven from their countries of origin. Another 28.8 million have been displaced from their homes within their country of origin. These people are displaced by lots of things including war, famine, disease, and certainly increasing religious persecution. It is no accident that the Gospel is spreading like wildfire among refugee peoples in various parts of the world. The stories of displaced people carrying the Gospel seed to soil of new places and people groups are countless. Indeed the Gospel is currently spreading the fastest in so-called closed countries. Many of the missionaries and church planters that are having the greatest impact in the Twenty-First Century are not seminary-trained professionals sent and supported by a denominational missions organization. They are much more likely to be young, uneducated, ordinary Christians, and may be refugees from somewhere else.

a.) There are no national boundaries.

John 4:19-24 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 ***Our fathers worshiped on this mountain,*** and ***you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.***" 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, ***when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.*** NKJV

There are no territorial lines. God's subjects are citizens of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation....." (**1 Peter 2:9**). God's kingdom is not defined by national interests, nationalism, or flags. This is not to say that each believer is not a citizen of his or her respective nation (**1 Peter 2:13-16, Romans 13:1-7**), but it is to say that every believer, regardless of nationality is included and bound together in the body of Christ. So in the case of Peter's audience, Peter, regardless of his nationality or physical location could address them, regardless of their nationality or physical location, with apostolic love, concern, and authority because each was a member of the Kingdom of God. So in our own case, regardless of nationality or physical location we are each a member of God's Kingdom. As a member of the kingdom (holy nation) we have certain responsibilities toward one another (**Matthew 18:15-20; Rom. 12:9-21, Gal. 6:1-5; Eph. 5:25-32; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 3:12-17**), not the least of which is to comfort one another in suffering or persecution (**2 Corinthians 1:3-7**).

You, however, do have to be a person from a third world country who has fled his home to escape something. The world in which we live regularly displaces believers from family, friends, and church ties. We can find hope in the fact that God is working in and fulfilling his great plans through the very things that turn our lives upside down. God has been drawing, is now drawing, and, until the final judgment, will continue to draw sinful men back to Himself and to restore the world that sin corrupted. Jesus' supreme purpose on earth was "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). This is therefore also the supreme mission of the church and each believer. And regardless of what unfamiliar corner of the world we may find ourselves, we too are still a part of God's family and a citizen of his eternal Kingdom.

1. These "pilgrims and strangers" don't hold citizenship in this world but, are members of a Holy Nation. in that Holy Nation only comes through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus made Citizenship in the holy nation possible. Peter refers to Christ's body on the cross (2:24) and His dying for our sins (**1Pet 3:18**).

- Peter speaks about the suffering of Jesus in His body (4:1)
- Peter refers to the fact that he observed Jesus' agony (5:1).
- Peter refers to the sinlessness of Christ (1:19, 2:22).
- Peter writes that He (Christ) died for the unrighteous (3:18) and sprinkled His blood for the redemption of sinners (1:2).
- By His (Jesus) death, God has given us an opportunity of a new birth (1:3),
- The resurrection of the Lord Jesus and as a result of the new birth saves you

1 Peter 3:21 There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, NKJV

God's kingdom is not defined by geography, there is no place that the gospel should not go. Believers are witnesses to the world. It is God's love that extends salvation to sinners (Jonah, John 1, 3). God has been drawing, is now drawing, and, until the final judgment, will continue to draw sinful men back to Himself and to restore the world that sin corrupted. Jesus' supreme purpose on earth was "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). This is therefore also the supreme mission of the church and each believer. This is the reason why the subjects of the kingdom remain on earth (**John 20:21; Rom. 1:14-16**).

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friends, and church ties. We can find hope in the fact that God is working in and fulfilling his great plans through the very things that turn our lives upside down. God has been drawing, is now drawing, and, until the final judgment, will continue to draw sinful men back to Himself and to restore the world that sin corrupted. Jesus' supreme purpose on earth was "to seek and save that which was lost" (**Luke 19:10**). This is therefore also the supreme mission of the church and each believer. And regardless of what unfamiliar corner of the world we may find ourselves, we too are still a part of God's family and a citizen of his eternal Kingdom

2. Here Peter begins to show that who we are is the result of the activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. *"Elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1Pet 1:2)*
 - a) - **"Elected"** means simply "chosen." "Elected" in the original Greek is actually an adjective of "pilgrims" in verse 1. Peter is not trying to present the full doctrine of election here. He was simply reminding some displaced people that God had chosen them.
 - b) - **"Foreknowledge"** as a noun is found only one other time, Acts 2:23, in the NT, though the verb form is found in great verses like Rom. 8:28. Peter's description is rooted in God's knowledge of all things, and in particular his intimate knowledge of us (Ps. 1, Amos 3:2, Matt 7:23, John 10:14, 2 Tim. 2:19).
 - **"Fore"** simply dates when he knows (before). God eternally knows us and all things about us. Just as we find comfort in the fact that God has chosen, we can also find encouragement in the fact that he has mapped out our pilgrimage through life based on his infinite eternal knowledge of all things.

Strong's Concordance: KJV - foreknowledge.-NT:4267 forethought:

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III. We are Pilgrims, Placed According to God's Plan, For God's Purposes

"For obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus" (1Pet 1:2)

1. "For" suggests God's purpose for the journey of the Pilgrim. "Obedience and sprinkling" bring to mind the scene in Exodus 24 when Moses read the Book of the Covenant to the people and they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient." Then Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant the Lord has made with you according to all these words."

NT:3927 parepidemos (par-ep-id'-ay-mos); from NT:3844 and the base of NT:1927; an alien alongside, i.e. a resident foreigner: KJV - pilgrim, stranger.

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2. **We Are Pilgrims: 1Peter 1:1** describes the condition of the early day Christian as being (pilgrims) a person without a homeland, a pilgrim searching for a city not built with hands:

- a) Just as Abraham left the country in which he lived, at God's direction he left his world behind to search for a place that would become his homeland, so must the Christian travel this world as a pilgrim led by God to the heavenly city whose "maker is God"

Gen 12:1-3 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." NKJV

Hebrews 11:9-10 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 **for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.** NKJV

Illustration: THE KEY CALLED PROMISE

In John Bunyan's great allegory, Pilgrim's Progress, the incident is related of how Christian decides to leave the Main Highway and follow another Path which seemed easier. But this Path leads him into the territory of Giant Despair who owns Doubting Castle.

Eventually he is captured by Giant Despair and kept in a dungeon. He is advised to kill himself. The Giant said there was no use trying to keep on with his journey. For the time, it seemed as if Despair had really conquered Christian. But then, Hope, Christian's companion, reminds him of previous victories. So it came about that on Saturday about midnight they began to pray, and continued in prayer until almost morning.

Now a little before it was day, good Christian, as one half-amazed, broke out in passionate speech, "What a fool am I thus to lie in a stinking Dungeon, when I may as well be at liberty. I have a Key in my bosom called Promise that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Then said Hopeful, "That's good news. Good Brother, pluck it out of thy bosom and try." And the prison gates flew open. (Tan, P. L. (1996). Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc. From a sermon by Matthew Kratz, The Attack on Hope, 8/27/2011)

- b) We Are Chosen: Haggai 2:23** " ..says the Lord, 'and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,' says the Lord of hosts." Joseph was chosen by pharaoh, Ruler of Egypt to represent the pharaoh's in Egypt, Joseph was acknowledge by the "signet ring" placed on his hand, (**Gen 41:42**), God has placed His mark (signet ring) on us to identify us as "not of this world but as citizen of the kingdom of God" the mark of God should serve as a reminder to us that we have been chosen of God.. **Isa 41:8-9** states that God has "chosen us". We have been bought with a price (**1Cor 6:20**). We should be ever mindful that the blood of Christ that has redeemed us from the bondage of sin and not our own righteousness (**Eph 2:9**) . Peter writes in **1 Peter 2:11** "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." to live a life that that pleases God. but also points people to Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, **they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.** NKJV

c) We must realize that when God placed mark on our life through the Blood of Jesus Christ we are called to a life of obedience and that the acceptance of that call set us free from the bondage of sin.

Illustration: John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress, said in a sermon entitled, The Heavenly Footman, "It is but a vain thing to talk of going to heaven if thou let thy heart be encumbered with those things that would hinder." **Conclusion**

We are God's people, regardless of their immediate circumstances or current state of being. We may find ourselves displaced and living as aliens in the most hostile environments imaginable. But God is working out his plan as he works in us. We are a part his family and his Kingdom, and he gives us the grace and peace we need to make it through.

One of the popular movies of this holiday season was "Unbroken," which portrays the true story of Louis Zamperini, a man who ultimately found inexhaustible hope after having experienced displacement, cruel mistreatment, and unspeakable hardship. Zamperini, the son of Italian immigrants, grew up in Torrance, California. He was a rebellious youth who had gotten into all kinds of trouble until his older brother encouraged him to go out for the track team. He was surprisingly good at cross-country running due to his endurance and stamina. He was undefeated his final three years in high school and won the California State Championship in Cross Country. He also received a track scholarship to the University of Southern California. In 1936 he tried out for the U. S. Olympic team and competed in the 5000 meter race. He placed eighth, but he set a world record in his final lap.

After WWII broke out, Zamperini served as the bombardier on a B-24 Liberator bomber. He survived several combat missions and even a crash landing. In on May 27, 1943, while on a reconnaissance mission, his plane developed mechanical problems and crashed into the ocean, killing eight of the eleven crew members. He and two other crew members were adrift on two life rafts, facing starvation, dehydration, shark attacks, and storms for 47 days. One of his companions died while at sea. He was picked up by the Japanese near the Marshall Islands. He was interrogated and tortured by the Japanese and was eventually placed in a POW camp in Tokyo. The infamous Omori POW camp was run by one of the most wanted war criminals of WWII, Mutsuhiro "Bird" Wantanabe. The sadistic "Bird" sought to crush Zamperini spirit through all kinds of cruelty and punishment. But Zamperini's spirit was "unbroken" until the war ended and he was liberated by Allied forces.

That's pretty much where the story ends in the movie, but there is much more. Though his spirit was "unbroken" by the Japanese, his life was scarred by the experiences he had gone through. After the war, he married and tried to resume a normal life. He experienced continuous nightmares and depression and began drinking heavily to forget his experiences during the war. His volatile state almost destroyed his

