

Exiles of the Dispersion

1. Greeting

1 Peter 1:1-25

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 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.

Peter is writing at a time after the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. Until then, most of the disciples had stayed in Jerusalem and sent out others, including Paul and Barnabas, to share the Gospel with the Gentiles. Rome has lost its' patience with the insurgency of the zealots and torn down the Temple in Jerusalem. At that point the Apostles dispersed throughout the known world. This is known in Latin as the diaspora, or as Peter calls it here the dispersion. Peter is now writing to them and is acknowledging them as exiles. Now some of these believers were actually Jews who were now living in exile in Asia Minor (Modern day Turkey), but most were local believers. He still addresses them as exiles because he recognizes that although they were natives to that area, as Christians, this world is not our own and we are exiles, strangers in a strange land. While these Gentiles are new to God's favor, God had a plan and foreknew that they would come to believe in Jesus and our now part of God's chosen people, the body of Christ. As such God has made them His own and has sent them His Holy Spirit to set them apart to be obedient to the teachings of His son, Jesus. They have been redeemed to this new purpose through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. To all those who call on His name, God will multiply peace and grace.

In the middle east Muslims greet each other with "Salaam Alaykum" which means "peace be with you. This greeting actually originated with Abrahamic Jews which said "Shalom Aleichem" The response is "Wa Alaikum Assalaam" which means "And also with you" If you grew up in what is known as a "high church" tradition you will recognize this. However, for Peter this is not something you just say, for him peace is not an absence of war, conflict, or persecution, but comes from a deep relationship with God. It means, may you get to know Him in a deep, intimate way.

Grace is God's favor, kindness, and friendship. It is also His forgiving mercy whereas we discussed last week, He does not visit upon us the judgment that we so richly deserve. His Grace is also the fact that He gives us what we do not deserve, His salvation, gifts, and ultimately glory in the age to come.

2. Born Again to a Living Hope

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary,

you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

We live in hope for a future glory that as people who have been born again, we will share with Jesus when He comes again. In the here and now, we experience trials, pain, and trouble, but this only serves to test and strengthen the muscle of our faith. This trial by fire burns away everything that is not of Him and for Him. Being able to have the kind of relationship with Him that praises, exalts and puts Him first in our lives, results in a joy that transcends anything else we have ever experienced.

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

The prophets of the Old Testament did not live to see the fulfillment of their prophecies, but you have. In that sense, when they gave their prophecies, they were serving you who have seen in Jesus the fulfillment of those prophecies. You are the recipients of those blessings, those mysteries. Peter says we are so blessed that even the Angels longed to look into these mysteries that are now being fulfilled in your presence. They were hidden from them but revealed to us.

3. Called to Be Holy

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Therefore, since all of this was done for your benefit, then we need to redouble our efforts to live in a way that is different from the way this world lives, to be a living testimony of the good news. You have been set apart for a special purpose and you should not defile yourselves by doing things that are not in line with that purpose.

Holiness Illustration

You were redeemed, ransomed from the life of sin to which you were a slave, not by money or gold. You were born into that slavery because of Adam and your forefathers. You were paid for by the sacrificial blood of the perfect sacrifice that is Jesus. Before the beginning of time. He knew that you would choose Him and live for Him. Because of that we have hope for the future.

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever." (Isaiah 40:6-8)

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

All of us who call upon the name of Jesus are part of the Body of Christ, and we share in a common inheritance. This inheritance is guaranteed by the Word of God. While our physical form is finite, will grow old and decrepit and ultimately die, spiritually we are born again into an imperishable form.

Peter quotes the prophet Isaiah that no matter how bright we may shine while we are here, we are like grass or the flowers of the field that wither and fade away.

What never fades, changes of stops to exist in God's Word which is eternal. It is His word that guarantees eternal life as co-heirs with Christ.