

1 Peter 1:1-2 | “Sojourners in a Strange Land”

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter, chapter 1, and we will be in just verses 1 and 2 this morning.

As you guys know, my normal way of preaching is preaching through a book of the Bible.

So since I’ve been here, I’ve preached through several books already.

And what I tend to do is make sure that I preach on both Old Testament and New Testament books, as well as books of different genres.

So I’ve done a gospel, minor prophets, wisdom literature, and things like that. *[pause]*

Well our new book series that I’ve chosen to do is 1 Peter, and I’ve decided to really go in-depth into it.

So we will take smaller sections and dig deep into what the epistle says.

It will take about 6 months, and I chose the book because of how relevant it is to our current situation. *[pause]*

Basically, the summary of the book of 1 Peter is: ‘living as a Christian in the midst of a hostile world.’

Sounds about what we need right now, doesn’t it? *[pause]*

The book has a good combination of doctrinal truth as well as practical instruction.

So let’s read our verses...READ. *[pause]*

“You’re not really from around here, are you?”

Have you ever heard that question or maybe you were the one who said it to someone else.

We ask that question because we meet someone, who we can tell hasn’t been here that long. *[pause]*

I think about when I first came here to Clearfield...

I’m sure many people asked me that question many times.

There were times that I asked for directions, and people would say, “Turn there where the old elementary school used to be.”

Well I didn’t know what or where this old elementary school was, I was new to the area! *[pause]*

Or something else that I noticed around here is that every little area of the town has its own name.

There's East End, West Side, South Park, Reedsville, and others.

I definitely had to get used to these names when I came. *[pause]*

Coming to a new place involves understanding new areas, terms, culture, and history - and you can usually tell who lives there permanently and who doesn't. *[pauseeee]*

Back when I was living in Lancaster, I understood this concept first-hand.

You could tell who lived in Lancaster permanently and who was just temporarily there by hearing how they said the name of the town.

Did they pronounce it, "Lan-Caster" or "Lancaster".

By the way, it's "Lancaster" for those of you who don't know.

Just by the way they pronounced the city, you could tell who lived there permanently, and who was just a temporary resident. *[pause]*

Well did you know that Peter here at the beginning of his letter speaks about how *we* are temporary residents on earth?

But the status of our residence isn't based on how we pronounce things, or if we know where landmarks are, but based on where our true citizenship is found. *[pause]*

This idea is actually a helpful thing to remember as we go through the whole book since Peter repeats this idea later on.

It's almost like this truth is a lens that we have to look through as we look at every part of life.

And so that's why I've titled this entire series, "Sojourners in a Strange Land." *[pause]*

I'll expand on this a little later, but before that, I want to make sure I cover some preliminary information about our book.

*So the first point for today is...*

### **I. The Author's Identity: Peter, an Apostle**

We either keep or throw away a letter based on who the author is and what content is in the letter.

The other day I was going through old paperwork, and I had to decide either to 'keep it or chuck it'.

And the way that I decided what was kept and what was trash was by considering *who* wrote it and *what* was in it.

I even found some old love letters that Kate wrote to me, and of course I kept them because of who wrote them and what they said. *[pause]*

If someone was merely an acquaintance and there wasn't much in a letter they sent you, you would probably get rid of it at some point.

Well the book that we are going to study through was actually a letter.

And based on it's author and content, it was never thrown away, but preserved for us, since it is God speaking through the apostle Peter. *[pause]*

Right from the start of the letter, we are given our author's name: Peter.

Peter is one the 12 disciples of Jesus during his earthly ministry, and as you know, he was very bold and courageous, yet he could also put his foot in his mouth often.

He denied Christ 3 times after he said that he never would.

But Jesus graciously restored him to service, and Peter went on to become one of the main leaders in the early church.

His bold leadership was definitely needed as the church first began. *[pause]*

He also gives his title by saying, "an apostle of Jesus Christ."

This title reminds his readers that he isn't just some random Peter off the street, but he is *the* Peter, who was a witness to Jesus' life and ministry.

In fact, later on in chapter 5, verse 1, he says that he is "a witness of the sufferings of Christ."

There he explains that he is an eyewitness of what happened to the Lord. *[pause]*

So this is the Apostle Peter, and being an apostle, it gives him authority to speak on behalf of God.

And as we know, Scripture is God-breathed.

So Peter wrote exactly what God intended to say to us through him. *[pauseeee]*

The letter seems to be written from Rome, most likely sometime between 62 and 64 A.D.  
*[pause]*

And his purpose in writing was to encourage the Christians to stand firm in the faith in the midst of a hostile world, where they were facing suffering and opposition. *[pause]*

*Now that we have seen who the author was, who were his recipients?...*

## **II. The Author's Recipients: Chosen Sojourners**

Peter wrote to churches throughout Asia Minor, which is where modern day Turkey is located.

He wrote most likely to mostly Gentiles, but there were probably some Jewish converts to Christianity as well. *[pause]*

Peter mentions one more thing about these Christians, which I want to slow down and unpack, since Peter unpacks it as well...

...And it's that these Christians were "elect exiles" scattered throughout these areas. *[pause]*

What Peter is doing is he's speaking about their identity. *[pauseeee]*

"There's a story of the famous German philosopher Schleiermacher, who did much to shape the progress of modern thought...."

...One day as an old man he was sitting alone on a bench in a city park.

A policeman thinking that he was a vagrant came over and shook him and asked, 'Who are you?' Schleiermacher replied sadly, 'I wish I knew.'" *[pause]*

That famous philosopher didn't know his identity, but thankfully, we never have to wonder what our identity is.

We never have to say, "I wish I knew," but we are told here in these verses - we are 'chosen sojourners'. *[pauseeee]*

Let's first focus on the term, 'sojourners'.

I don't think "exile" used in the ESV is the best word to translate here, for this is not a "forced" dwelling somewhere else.

But rather, these are people who are simply temporary residents living in a foreign place.

That's why other translations use the words: strangers, aliens, pilgrims, and foreigners.

I actually like the word, 'sojourner'.

I know we don't use it too much, but it's the idea that I'm just temporarily here, not permanently here.

And what we find with Peter is that he's saying, "I'm writing to chosen sojourners."

And he uses this in a spiritual sense, showing them (and us) our identity as Christ followers. *[pauseeee]*

Many of them may have grown up in the town that they were living, but they could still be called temporary residents.

How is that possible?

Because Peter was reminding them that this world was not their true home.

In light of eternity, this world is simply a temporary residence.

As long as you live on this earth, you are rightly called an alien, foreigner, or sojourner. *[pause]*

Peter even makes this clear later on in chapter 1, verse 17.

The CSB version states it this way, “you are to conduct yourselves in reverence during your time living as strangers.” *[pauseeee]*

You know how sometimes when you fill out paperwork, it asks for your “permanent address”?

Well for the Christian - your current, earthly address isn't actually your permanent address, but your temporary one.

Now I don't recommend writing, “Heaven,” on your paperwork, but that's the real truth.

We are temporary visitors in a strange land.

We belong and live for God, not this world. *[pause]*

Christians are a part of a worldwide scattering, as we are all scattered throughout different regions.

So that means you may have lived in the same town, or even the same house your whole life, yet Clearfield still isn't your permanent address.

You may have lived here for 70 years, yet you are still a foreigner. *[pause]*

There's that hymn that conveys this idea when it says, “The world is not my home, I'm just a passing through.

My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue; the angels beckon me from heaven's open door, and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.” *[pause]*

If you think about it, living as sojourners, we are actually reliving the life of Israel and the patriarchs, as they lived this way, too.

In Hebrews 11, the author makes this plain when he says...

“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.” *[pauseee]*

So the question I want to ask you is this: do you see yourself as simply a temporary resident here on earth, or do you think that this is your home?

Did you know that your answer to that question will influence how you think and live?

Think about it...

If you think that this is your home, then you will strive to fit in and morph yourself into the way the world lives.

If you think that this is your home, then you will place all of your hopes in the here and now.

You will place your trust in who is in control and who the leader is in your country because in your mind, this is all there is!

But did you ever think that what’s happening in our nation is helping us to remember that this world is not our home?

And praise the Lord that it isn’t because hopelessness would abound.

But thanks be to God that we are simply temporary residents here, and our hope and trust is in our true homeland, the better country, the lasting city of God. *[pause]*

Reminding yourself that you are simply a sojourner helps you keep things in perspective in this world.

In essence, it keeps you forward-looking because you remember that the things here are temporary and fading, they won’t last. *[pause]*

So the solution to the worldly Christian, who tries to fit in and follow the world’s values is remembering that you are a stranger and sojourner in this world.

The solution to the Christian absolutely devastated over the results of an election is remembering that this sin-cursed world isn’t the end-all, it’s just a temporary living situation. *[pause]*

When you keep your true identity as a sojourner in your mind, it gives you hope and empowerment to live for God, no matter what’s going on. *[pauseeee]*

Paul even supports this truth when he contrasts those against Christ, having their minds set on earthly things, with Christians, when he says in Philippians 3:20...

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,”  
*[pauseeee]*

This also means that we shouldn't be surprised by the world's different values and perception of us.

Because we are not of this world.

Jesus says that we were chosen *out* of the world, and that the world hates us because of this.

If it loved us, that would be a sign that we were still of the world. *[pause]*

So my question is, why do we so often act like this world is the end-all?

Why do we act as if we weren't sojourners in this world?

Imagine the difference it would make on your thoughts, emotions, and attitude if you always had in the back of your mind, “I'm a temporary resident here, I have something better and more lasting coming.”

That would make a difference. *[pause]*

Now as Peter will talk about later on, just because we are sojourners here doesn't mean we just sit back and do nothing while we live here...

...But it means that our perspective and values will be different than those in the world around us.  
*[pause]*

Christian, you are an alien, it's true!

You are a foreigner here, a pilgrim, a sojourner.

That is your identity as a child of God, so embrace it, remember it, cherish it, and live like it.  
*[pauseeee]*

Not only are we sojourners, but we are *chosen* sojourners.

There's comfort in knowing that this world is not my home, but it's doubly comforting to know that I'm a chosen sojourner. *[pause]*

The term used here could be translated as either elect or chosen, but it's the same idea.

It's the truth that before the foundation of the world, God sovereignly and unconditionally chose those to be saved.

In John 15, Jesus makes this point as he says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you,” and then a couple verses later he says, “I chose you out of this world.”

I know that some are uncomfortable with this truth, but it's all throughout the Bible.

Let me just give you a few...

Acts 13:48, "as many as were appointed to eternal life believed."

2 Thessalonians 2:13, "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,"

Ephesians 1:4-5, "even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," *[pauseee]*

So according to his sovereign purpose and will, those who believe were chosen before the world even existed. *[pause]*

It's interesting that for the biblical writers, they don't see this truth as being controversial, but rather comforting.

And I believe that we should do the same, for they saw it as this amazing, comforting, and praise-worthy idea.

They know that Christians are chosen, yet they also know that people have to respond in faith, and they didn't see any contradiction in that. *[pauseee]*

So what I want to do is take this truth as it is and see what Peter has to say as he builds off of it.

What Peter does is he says that they are chosen sojourners and then in verse 2, he expands on that phrase.

They were chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."

So this is the basis of our election.

God is said here of foreknowing people.

And knowing in the Bible speaks of a personal, relational knowledge of someone.

So as theologian Wayne Grudem says, "God, looking into the future, thought of certain people in saving relationship to him, and in that sense he 'knew them' long ago."

And related to this, commentator Thomas Constable says,

"God's foreknowledge has an element of determinism in it because whatever really happens that God knows beforehand exists or takes place because of His sovereign will." *[pause]*



Instead of getting too bogged down in minute details, let's just think of this generally...

If you are a Christian, before you existed, God knew, loved, and chose you. *[pause]*

This is so comforting because he didn't say, "I guess that guy is allowed to be saved, too."

But rather, "I knew you before the creation of the world, and I chose you." *[pause]*

This choosing wasn't random like picking a lottery ball out of a drum.

If it was, then we would say, "I'm only saved because of luck."

This choosing wasn't based on our works or our merit.

That's impossible because we are sinners, dead in our sin.

But it was based solely on grace!

It was based on his good, sovereign purposes and will.

And since it's based on that then all we can do is fall on our knees and praise our good and gracious Lord!

It's truly humbling! It's ever comforting! *[pause]*

Who am I that God would do such a thing?

This being chosen isn't like being chosen first in a sports game, where you proudly think, "Look at me, I'm the best, that's why he chose me first."

But rather, we are humbled and thankful for it, and say, "It was all of grace!" *[pause]*

He chose us not according to works, not according to our greatness, not according to random processes, but according to his foreknowledge of us.

We didn't just arrive on the scene, and God was like, "I'm getting to know this girl and she's special, I'll choose her."

No, he knew us and loved us and chose us before the world was created!

God took the initiative, and now we are his special people, his children, who were beloved and cared for before we existed. *[pause]*

We may be rejected by the world, but we are chosen by God, and that's what truly matters. *[pause]*

His foreknowledge is the basis of our election, but we also see the means of our election. *[pause]*

The ESV says, “in the sanctification of the Spirit,” but I believe it's better translated, “by” or “through” the sanctifying work of the Spirit, as many other translations say.

This is how we were saved.

The Spirit worked in our lives to set us apart from the world, and place us in the realm of the chosen and holy.

It's focus seems to be on conversion. *[pause]*

Think of the importance of the new birth, which the Spirit works in us.

For anyone to be saved, the Spirit has to do a work that you can't do on your own.

The Spirit takes that chosen person, and sets them apart at salvation.

He has sealed us and initiated us into a new way of life. *[pause]*

Think of it like this: God chose us, but there has to actually be change that happens to be saved, and that's where the Spirit comes in. *[pauseeee]*

So we saw the basis, the means, and now the result of our election - obedience to Christ and sprinkling of his blood. *[pause]*

The result of the Spirit's work in salvation is that we obey Christ.

Here we see that there must be a response of faith to be saved, and this is characterized as “obedience to Jesus Christ”.

Paul uses this kind of language in Romans 16, where he's talking about the gospel and he says,

“[it] has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the *obedience of faith*.”

No person is saved without first obeying Christ by believing in Him.

And by our text's structure, it's showing us that those who are chosen are the very ones who will obey Christ in faith. *[pause]*

This whole election truth isn't meant to make us sit idly and wonder, “Oh no, am I chosen?”

But instead, we simply respond in faith and obedience, and that's the way you know you are chosen. *[pauseeeee]*

All of these truths are again so comforting!

Just notice how God is the initiator!

Obedience isn't the basis of our election, but the result.

We are chosen “for” or “to” obedience to Jesus Christ not “because” of obedience to Jesus Christ.

**And we are chosen to be sprinkled by his blood.**

That is, we are forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. *[pauseee]*

**This is all very deep and very theological, but it’s also very true and very comforting.**

The whole Trinity was involved in your salvation - think of it!

The Father chose you, the Spirit sanctifies you, and it’s through the obedience of faith in the Son’s shed blood. *[pause]*

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are chosen, that is your identity.

**The world cannot break this relationship, for it was formed by God himself.**

You were chosen before the foundation of the world!

**You were sanctified by the Spirit.**

You obeyed Christ by responding in faith, and you were sprinkled by his blood, which has forgiven you and cleansed you of sin.

**This is the miracle of being a Christian!**

He took a person dead in their sins, and made them alive in Christ.

**He took a person that hated and sinned against Him, and loved, changed, and forgave them.**

What else can you do, but marvel at this reality? *[pause]*

**As you live your life, do you remember your identity as a chosen sojourner?**

Do you cherish it and live in alignment with it? *[pause]*

*We have seen the author’s identity and recipients, and now we see...*

### **III. The Author’s Desire: Grace and Peace**

He now gives a request on behalf of his readers.

This was a very common way to start a letter back in this day, but Peter uses it in a Christian way.

Instead of just saying, ‘Greetings to you,’ he desires for ‘grace and peace to be multiplied’ to them.

Why does he use these terms?

Well because he knew they needed it as they lived as sojourners. *[pause]*

He knew they needed grace, which is the free and unmerited kindness of God.

We have received grace through Christ's sacrifice for our sins, but we also continue to receive kindness from God each and every day. *[pause]*

In grace, Christ will continue to accomplish God's loving plans for us.

In grace, Christ will be our Good Shepherd - guiding and protecting us.

So Peter's desire is that they would continue to know and experience the grace of God in their lives. *[pause]*

It's the same with peace.

They definitely needed peace as they lived as sojourners in a strange land.

Peace is freedom from disturbance or tranquility.

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary gives a good insight into peace here when it says that peace...

"Brings to mind all that Christ did or would do to end the dominion of sin and to make peace between God and man, peace between all who are in Christ, and a state of being spiritually whole again." *[pause]*

In the midst of turmoil, Christians can have peace because our relationship with God is restored, and we serve a God who has given us amazing blessings both now and in the future. *[pauseeee]*

Grace and peace are needed as sojourners!

We need to remember that through Christ's work, he has been gracious to us and has given us peace.

And he will continue to do so, as we trust him, even when times are tough. *[pauseeee]*

Peter doesn't stop there either, but he wishes for this grace and peace to be multiplied to them.

That is, he wishes for them to experience these blessings *in abundance*.

God doesn't give these things sparingly.

He doesn't give meager grace or measly peace, but grace and peace in abundance!

He's not a stingy father, but a Father who gives more and more grace and peace to you. *[pause]*

Do you ever pray for someone else to receive more grace and peace?

This is a good and biblical thing to do, let's show our love for them in this way.

What blessings that we have in Christ! We are rich in Him. *[pauseeee]*

“One day William Reynolds, a Sunday School Missionary, went to see an old man in Illinois, who boasted of being an infidel.

The people told Mr. Reynolds not to speak to him about his soul because it would make him very angry.

The old man asked Mr. Reynolds to go up with him into the cupola of his barn and look at his great farm.

When they got up there, he said, “Mr. Reynolds, I came out here a poor boy when I was eighteen and I didn't own a cent, and now I own everything you can see in every direction.

Do you see those big fields of waving grain? Do you see those great pastures and meadowlands?

Do you see the great stretch of woodland? Do you see those great herds of cattle and droves of sheep?”

“They are all mine!” said the old man, as he pointed in the four directions of the compass.

“Well,” said Mr. Reynolds, “You are a pretty rich man in all those directions, but how much do you own in that direction?” pointing toward Heaven.

The rich old farmer looked up, and then he dropped his head and said, “I guess I don't own very much in that direction.” *[pauseeee]*

This is a reminder that those who trust fully in Christ's finished work on Calvary for salvation are rich beyond all comparison.

We may not have the riches of this world, but we have abundance in Christ, and grace and peace can be multiplied to us. *[pause]*

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ to be forgiven and saved from your sins?

Once you trust in Him, your identity is changed as you will receive grace and peace, and you will become a chosen sojourner. *[pauseeee]*

*As we live our lives, reflecting upon our identity in Christ, we understand that...*

**Chosen sojourners living in a strange land need grace and peace.**

It's amazing how much can be jam-packed into the greeting part of a letter, isn't it?

Peter shows us that even a Christian's greeting in a letter can be filled with doctrinal truth and encouragement.

He doesn't waste a moment to jump right in and comfort his suffering readers.

And in just two verses, he told them who was writing to them, what their identity was in Christ, and summarized what they needed as they lived. *[pause]*

Christian, you are a chosen sojourner living in a strange land, and you need grace and peace!

May these things continually be on your mind as you go through every day...

You are a chosen sojourner, loved and given a permanent home in Heaven.

In grace, the whole Trinity has played a part in your salvation.

There's nothing that you did that earned this identity, but it was all of God.

There's no room for *boasting*, but only for *broadcasting* the greatness of our God. *[pause]*

This world is not your home, but you are simply a temporary resident, striving to stand firm in your faith and be a witness in the world.

And as you live this sojourning life, you are in need of continual grace and peace from God.

His abundant blessings give us encouragement, strength, joy, and motivation to keep going and being faithful, even in the middle of a hostile environment.

So will you join me in remembering that we are chosen sojourners in a strange land?