**Introduction to 1 Peter**

**1 Peter 1:1-2**

**Introduction**

 Good morning! Today is a very exciting day because we have the opportunity to begin studying our third book of Scripture together. Over the past 22 months that we have been together we have studied the epistle of James and the Old Testament book of Daniel. Each of these books have given us ways that we can live out the faith we have in Jesus Christ in very practical ways. James reminded us the importance of how our actions serve as proof to others that our faith in Christ is real. Daniel showed us in his life how being faithful to God results in a life that is filled with His presence as well as the hope that followers of Christ have to look forward to in the future. Today we are beginning our study through the first epistle of Peter. With the time that we have together this morning we are going to look at the first two verses of chapter 1 which provides us with the author, the audience as well as the purpose of this epistle. What we will learn is that even though we are aliens living in a strange land that is not our real home we still have the hope of Christ to sustain us as we endure challenging times in this life.

**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,**

**To those who reside as strangers, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (vv. 1-2)**

**Author: The Apostle Peter (v. 1)**

 As we look at our passage for today, we see in the first few words the author identifying himself. The author is none other than the Apostle Peter. Of course, Peter was one of the twelve disciples called by Jesus when He was walking along the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus called him into the ministry his occupation was a fisherman. Matthew records the calling of Peter in this way: **“Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of people’” (Matthew 4:18-19).** I am quite certain that there is a song that is going through all of your minds right now, Fishers of Men! As these verses tell us, Peter’s name when he was called was Simon. Later Jesus will change his name and we will discuss this later. The way that Jesus calls both Simon and Andrew into the ministry is very illustrative. He says that when they follow Him that He would make them fishers of people. The very occupation these men had started in their lives would give them the skills that they would later use in ministry. This shows us how God takes those who are willing to be used by Him and uses their talents to carry out His will.

 As we just mentioned Simon would eventually have Him name changed by Jesus later during His ministry. This happened when the disciples were talking with Jesus after they had returned from their spreading of the good news in the surrounding regions. Matthew records the name change for Simon this way **“Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you yourselves say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven’” (16:13-19).** Jesus gave Simon the new name Peter which means the rock. Now what exactly is the rock of the Christian faith? The rock is the understanding that Jesus Christ is not just a prophet returning from the Old Testament or John the Baptist back from the dead. Jesus Christ is the one and only Messiah and He is the Son of the Living God. This is the truth that the entirety of our faith is built upon. The fact that Peter was the only disciple to answer the question with such conviction and courage gave earned him now only a name that means “the rock” but Jesus also rewarded him with the keys to the kingdom of heaven. This is the reason why we see his name listed first when the disciples are listed in Matthew 10. He is referred to as the first disciple because of the authority that Jesus gave Him the passage we just looked at.

 Another instance where we see the authority of leadership given to Peter is in the Gospel of John chapter 21. This takes place after the resurrection of Jesus as well as after Peter had denied three times that he knew Jesus. He is asked three times by Jesus if he loved Him. After answering each time Jesus responds with these words “feed my sheep.” Jesus gave Peter the work on spreading the gospel and helping his brothers who would be sharing the good news all over the world. Even though Peter was a man who usually acted before he thought things through, (walking on the water with Jesus and offering to die with Jesus at the Last Supper) Jesus used him to lead the disciples and guide the early days of the church. This is the Peter who wrote this epistle.

**The Audience (v. 1)**

In verse 1 we are also being told who the intended audience of this epistle was. Peter writes that this letter is being written **to those who reside as strangers, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.** We need to look at this very carefully before moving ahead because Peter calls these people strangers and says that they are scattered throughout these different regions. First, what does he mean when he refers to these people as strangers? To explain this better I would like to ask if anyone here this morning in their translation has a different word than stranger? In the 1995 NASB translation the word used for strangers was aliens. The term in Greek for aliens is Parepidemois (par-ep-id'-ay-mos) which is one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives. What Peter means when he refers to all the people in these regions as strangers (aliens) is that they are followers of Christ who are scattered around the earth and are not in their true home. This tells us that all who trust in Christ as Savior and have come to faith in Him are living in this world as strangers and that this place is not our eternal home. Not only does Peter make this point with these readers, but the writer of Hebrews states this as well. In chapter 11 after having discussed the heroes of the faith in the Old Testament the writer then shares these words **“13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen and welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country which they left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 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 a city for them” (Hebrews 11:13-16).** All of those who died before the coming of Christ were awaiting His arrival and therefore were strangers on this earth who were awaiting a better home in heaven with the Lord. So, what we have learned is that the readers of this letter are believers in Christ scattered throughout all the regions.

 Now where exactly are the places that Peter lists in verse 1? Let’s look at the map provided so that we can become familiar with where they are at. He mentions a total of 5 places in the verse. What we see on the map is that Pontus is located at the top right of the map along the Black Sea. This is a place where the gospel had reached because in Acts chapter 2 verse 9 we are told that when the apostles received the Holy Spirit, they received the ability to speak in the languages of the **Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia.** When they heard Peter’s sermon they were pierced at the heart and came to faith in Christ.

 The second area Peter lists is Galatia, which we know is also a region of believers because Paul writes a letter to the church there. You will notice that it is in the center of the Asian continent and includes the cities of Antioch, Lystra and Iconium. The third region is Cappadocia which is south of Pontus and borders what is today Iraq. Asia is to the far left on the map and includes Ephesus, which is another city where Paul established a church. The last region listed is Bithynia and is in the far north along the Black Sea as well. What all these areas have in common is that they are in what is today the country of Turkey. The letter was addressed to a wide range of people and language groups showing us that by the time of this writing the gospel had spread very far in the Roman world as well as the surrounding areas.

 As we continue, the next aspect of these readers is that they were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. As we have discussed in the past Peter is saying that salvation has come to all the people in these regions because of the will of God. Foreknowledge is the fact that God the Father is omniscient meaning that He knows ahead of time those who will choose to accept His offer of salvation and those who will reject Him. What Peter then explains as he continues on is how God works in salvation and saves those who trust in Him.

 We see that salvation is a sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is the process of salvation where the believer is being molded and perfected through the Holy Spirit to become more Christlike. Let’s look at a couple of examples of how the concept of sanctification is taught by the Apostle Paul. **In Romans 6:22 he writes “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”** Paul was saying that in our natural condition without God we were slaves to sin, but because of the work of the Holy Spirit we have been freed from the slavery to sin and are now right with God resulting in eternal life. Sanctification is a process of becoming more Christlike as we mature in the faith. Therefore, someone who has been a Christian all of their life should bear the fruit of salvation showing that they are desiring God more than before. We are sanctified through the work of the Holy Spirit. The late Pastor John MacArthur describes sanctification in this way: *“At salvation the sanctifying work of the Spirit sets believers apart from sin to God.”*

Once a person has become a believer in Christ and has been sanctified through the Holy Spirit Peter says that an effect of that sanctification is first that the person will obey Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul states it this way in **Ephesians 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”** Even though we still have to deal with our sinful nature working in us there is a desire in the life of a believer to be obedient to Christ and to follow His commandments. Jesus also shares these words with the disciples at the last supper **“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”** Those who love Christ and desire to obey Him will keep His commandments showing that the work of sanctification is present in their lives.

 Peter next says that sanctification results in being sprinkled with His blood. To explain this statement, we need to look back when Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the people to confirm their covenant they made with God. When the blood of the bull was poured on the altar and then sprinkled on the people this symbolized that God and the people had entered into a blood oath together. When the blood of Christ is sprinkled on those who trust Him as Savior this symbolizes the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus was instituting the Lord’s Supper He said these words regarding the cup **“And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:27-28).** The blood of Jesus has been poured out which has resulted in the sins of those who accept His sacrifice being forgiven.

**The Purpose of the Epistle (v. 2)**

Now we are going to look at the concluding words in verse 2. This shows us what is in Peter’s heart as he is writing this letter. He writes that he desires that grace and peace would be multiplied to all of the people. The first word he uses “grace” is the concept that God has given us all that we need to be made right in His sight. This is unwarranted and unmerited favor. Being a chosen inheritor of salvation is a gift of God that is more than any of us deserve. Peter wants remind His readers that God chose them for salvation before the foundation of the world and that because of this they have much to be thankful for that will give them peace. In what way does this give peace to those who have faith in Christ? What we learn is that we cannot earn our salvation by our deeds or by trying to be a good person. Without Christ all of us are like filthy rags in the sight of God. There is no action we can take that will free us from the bondage of sin that we are under. God in His infinite grace has given His one and only Son so that all who place their trust in Him will be freed from sin and experience eternal life. Peter desires that his readers experience the joy of that grace they have received.

 He also wanted his readers to experience the peace of God. Each of us experience the peace of God when we realize that God has reached into our lives and provided for us the salvation that we cannot earn on our own. This gift brings peace because we are no longer enemies of God as we were in our natural state. We are now forgiven, set apart and commissioned to do the good work of evangelism to share that good news with all of those whom the Lord will call. Not only does the peace of the Lord apply to this life today, but it gives us a blessed assurance that because of Christ we do not have to fear death or the grave any longer. When we are called from this world, we will be in the presence of God the Father and Christ the Son. We no longer have to be worried or fear death. All of us need to remember that because of the sin nature we have inherited that all of us will eventually pass away from this life. However, because of the peace of God we do not have to fear of that being the end of our existence. We will live on in eternity because God has provided a way of salvation for His creation.

**Conclusion**

As we have seen this morning, the first epistle of Peter is a letter of encouragement for followers of Christ to equip them with the joy of their salvation. Even though his readers are strangers on this earth awaiting their future reward for faithfulness there is still work to be done while they are here. This is the same message for each of us today. As we conclude let us look at three ways in which today’s message applies in our daily lives:

1. We need to embrace our identity as God’s chosen people. The way in which we do this is by living differently because we belong to Him. When we love others the way that Christ did and unashamedly share the truth of the gospel with them, we show that we are honoring our Father in all that we do.

2. We also need to rest in the assurance of our salvation- the Holy Spirit sanctifies resulting in our salvation. When we accept Christ as Savior we are sealed in His kingdom. This is the peace that Peter wrote about. We have peace because of what the Lord has done for us. May we always live in that peace and show it through our lives.

3. Finally, may we seek grace and peace daily in our lives through prayer, allowing Scripture to guide us and through obedience to Christ. This life is certainly full of trials, but when we approach it with the right perspective, we will have the peace that surpasses all human understanding. As we continue this letter, we will see how this attitude will help us as we live our lives here anticipating the reward for faithfulness.