

Elect sojourners (Quality: Good)

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- [0 : 00] The words found in the first epistle of Peter in the first chapter and at the first verse. The first epistle of Peter, chapter 1, at verse 1.
- Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.
- Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied. Now, we're thinking together about the people to whom this epistle was written in the first place.
- Remembering that that first, that primary reference of any part of Holy Scripture is always vital to the proper and the correct interpretation.
- We've seen from the terms that the apostle applies to these people in these first two verses the broad fact that they are Christians. They are believers, they are members of the Church of Christ.
- [1 : 22] And so far, we've confined ourselves to that general characterization. And drawn out some of the implications of the fact that here, as everywhere in the Bible, Scripture is not addressed to the world, to all men, but it is addressed to the Church.
- But, in spite of that, having been addressed to the Church, the Church is charged with carrying a certain message to the world.
- And this morning we considered that message, the fact that the Church is charged to go into all the world, and deliver a message in the name of the Lord.
- Now, we must leave these general considerations. We must begin to look more closely at the particular terms that the apostle uses, the terms from which the general considerations were drawn.
- It seems to me that the apostle here sets out three great fundamental things about these Christians, and therefore, in principle, about all Christians, and therefore, about ourselves.
- [2 : 41] First of all, he deals with the question of who they are. The fact. Second, he deals with the matter of how they became what they are, which is the explanation of the fact.
- And then thirdly, he deals with why they have become what they are, which is the object of the fact. This afternoon, let us look at the first of these.
- Who they are. Who they are, these people. To whom this epistle is written. The apostle applies, you will notice, two directly descriptive terms in verse 1.
- Or rather, in verse 1 and in the beginning of verse 2. But there is an explanation of that, to which I will come in a moment. Peter, to the strangers, elect.
- Now, I put these terms, these strongly contrasting terms together like that, because in the original they stand together. In the original it reads, Peter, to the elect strangers.
- [4 : 09] Scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, and so on. Now, these are the basic things about them. And it seems to me that these are the basic things about all Christians.

First, Christians are strangers, pilgrims, sojourners in this world. This was quite literally the case with these Christians.

Whether they were Jewish or Gentile, or, it seems more likely, a mixture of both. They were strangers. They were sojourners.

Now, that means that they were aliens. In other words, foreigners. In those five named provinces of Asia Minor, at this particular time.

That's where they lived, but that's not where they were born. That's where they lived, but they were not natives. They were not citizens. They didn't belong.

[5 : 10] Providential circumstances of one kind or another. Had uprooted them from the lands of their birth. Placed them in this foreign land.

And as aliens, of course, they would be known. They would be recognized. Their speech, their language, would betray them. Possibly their dress.

Their habit. Their general culture. Occupation, perhaps. If you've ever been and spent any time in another land, a foreign land.

Especially where there is another language and a different culture prevailing. You know the feeling. You feel a little bit ill at ease. Because you can't converse.

In the same way as anyone, everyone else. On the street, with you, can. You can't enter into the common things. Strangers.

[6 : 11] Aliens. A sense of not belonging. Which, you see, not only aliens or foreigners, but also sojourners.

In other words, pilgrims. Now that these people were here in these five provinces of Asia Minor, there was no guarantee that they were going to stay there.

They were birds of passage. They were in transit. They were not aliens who'd been brought in immigrants with a view to settling.

No. The word means not only aliens, but sojourners. Birds of passage. Going somewhere. There for a time only.

So, you see, the incentive to adapt themselves was not very great. The idea of becoming integrated in the land and its population was really not very strong.

[7 : 23] They were unsettled. There was no incentive to send their roots deep. Because they expected to move on somewhere else.

Sojourners. Visitors. Transients. Why bother learning the language if you know you're not going to be here very long? Why bother understanding the culture if you know that you haven't got to fit into it indefinitely?

The whole element of uncertainty that belongs to that category of transients or visitors. So, these people were under a double disadvantage.

As aliens or foreigners, they didn't possess the rights of citizens. And as sojourners, they were not eligible for naturalization.

They weren't eligible, that is, to apply for citizenship. Their position had about it something of that category that we became familiar with for a long time after the end of the last war.

[8 : 30] The stateless refugees. There were, from various parts of Europe, these thousands of people, who had been tossed about by the fortunes of war.

They belonged nowhere. They had no nationality. No state. They were refugees. A very real, practical, distressing situation. Who received this first epistle of Peter?

Well, this is the kind of person who received it. They were Christians. And they were sojourners and aliens. So you notice how Peter meets this particular situation.

He meets the people where they are. He calls them what they are. Strangers. Pilgrims. Sojourners. And he proceeds to give them comfort and consolation in Christ, relevant to their need.

We were speaking this morning about the need to differentiate between different types and categories of people, whether Christians or non-Christians. Well, here's an instance of that principle.

[9 : 40] Here's the case of Christians in a particular set of circumstances. Because their outward circumstances were what they were. This whole epistle is shot through with the whole idea of the Christian life as a spiritual pilgrimage.

See what the apostle says in verse 17 of this chapter. If he calls on the father who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

Sojourning. Or in the second chapter and the 11th verse. The apostle says, dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.

What is true of them outwardly is in effect true of all Christians in a far deeper and profounder sense than they imagine. He takes advantage of their temporary situation to enforce on their minds an abiding truth.

In other words, he does what our Puritan forefathers would have called, he improves the occasion. He takes advantage of the set of circumstances therein to bring certain truths of the gospel before.

[11 : 09] And one of those things is that the outward mark of a Christian in this world is that he is a stranger. He is a sojourner.

They learned it from their particular circumstances at that time. We, it seems to me, must learn it for very much the opposite reason. Our problem is not that we are in an alien land in a natural sense.

Our problem, our great temptation in the modern world with all its material comfort and convenience is to settle down in the world. As though we are here forever.

As though we are not on the move. For it's true, we are in it. We work in it. We have so much to do with it. We get so thoroughly accustomed to it.

It's sin, it's evil, it's vileness, after a time ceases to shock us. The arrogance, the pride, the godlessness.

[12 : 15] We become accustomed to it. We take it for granted. We cease to be shocked. But, the standards of the world are so generally, so commonly accepted, that Christians all too readily justify their actions because everybody is doing it.

It is the norm. Now I say, we need the corrective that the apostle is giving here, for precisely the opposite reason to these to whom he first addressed it.

We need the corrective. We need to be constantly reminded that if we are Christians, we're in transit. We're going on.

We're sojourners. We're moving somewhere. And we have to take consideration not only of where we are, but of where we're going.

This, of course, is one of the great themes of the scripture as a whole, all the way through. The whole history of Israel's pilgrimage through the wilderness in the Old Testament is typical of the Christians' pilgrimage through life.

[13 : 27] Paul writes about it to the Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 13. He says, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Chapter 13, and verse 14 in the epistle to the Hebrews, he says, Here have we no continuing city, no abiding city, if we seek one to come.

In this world, then, we need to be constantly reminded that the Christian is an alien. He's a foreigner. He doesn't belong.

Let me spell that out a little bit. Look at the Christian's view of God. That's one of the things that proves that he's an alien in this world. He says that God comes first.

That God reigns. That God controls men and controls everything. But the man of the world with whom he lives says exactly the opposite. He says this is man's world.

[14 : 41] That man is in charge. That man is the master of his own fate. That there is no greater being than the greatest of men. The Christian's view of God marks him out as alien, as other, as different.

And so he finds himself in the minority. Very much so. And if a Christian man adheres diligently to his view of God, he's very soon made to feel that he's an oddity.

That he's a misfit. That he's one who's an exception to the accepted scheme of things. That all manner of ways in which this misfit category is applied to him.

A Christian is an alien. His view of God makes him an alien in this world. Or again, another thing that makes a Christian, gives a Christian a sense of being an alien and a foreigner, is his view of sin.

The Christian takes the biblical view of sin. He finds it repugnant. He has no pleasure in it. He mourns over his own and he's sad about the sorrows and the sins of others.

[16 : 00] Sin to a Christian is a blight and a curse. An enormity. It's an affront to God and it's an affront to man. For the man of the world. There's no such word in his vocabulary as sin.

He does what he likes. He doesn't ask whether things are sinful or not. Nowadays he doesn't ask whether they're right or wrong or not. If he likes it, if it pleases him, if it satisfies him, if he enjoys it, if it makes him happy, it's all right.

And this is almost inevitable because, in the words of the psalmist, God is not in all his thoughts. Now that's the common view.

But you see, in that common view, once again, the Christian is outvoted. He's out of step. He's regarded as narrow, as Victorian, as peculiar.

Among all the broad-minded lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, an earnest Christian is very soon made to feel an alien and a stranger.

[17 : 12] You don't do what the man of the world does, therefore you're an object. You're not one of us. You're almost outside the human race in the way men think of you.

So it is in every respect. One might go on and deduce the same result from every Christian view and understanding.

Because the man of the world is bound to it and fettered to it, he can't lift himself higher. But that is the mark of a Christian.

He's been liberated. Those fetters have been broken. Those are the fetters that have been broken. A Christian is a man who is already in spirit, seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

He can see things from God's point of view. He can see things with the glory of the Son of God in his mind's eye. He is already living in another world.

[18 : 09] His sights are lifted. His horizon is lifted. He's no longer earth-backed. His goal is in glory. For to put it all in one word, the word that the Apostle goes on to use in our text, the thing that makes the Christian man a stranger and an alien more than anything else in this world, is the fact that he is also elect.

Elect. the very fact that he's chosen out, the very fact that he is taken out, the very fact that he is separated from, the very fact that he's taken out of the whole mass of perdition and given to God's blessed Son in covenant love and covenant bondage, and yet he still lives his life in this world.

I say the very fact that he's elect, that he's chosen out, and yet in the body he still lives in the world, makes him an alien. Peter, to the strangers elect.

But of course the Christian is not only an alien in this world, he's also a sojourner. He's a pilgrim. He's like these early Christians in this sense that he's here but he doesn't know how long he's here.

He's in transit. By the grace and the goodness of God he's on his way to glory. He's on his way to eternity. He's on his way to be with God.

[19 : 49] He's on his way to be like God's blessed Son. In this world he does all the good he can in all the ways he can but he doesn't take his eyes off the gold.

He sits loose to purely material things. He can't really settle down. He nightly pitches his moving tent a day's march nearer home.

His view of life, his view of death is all determined by the fact that he's going somewhere and he blesses God that he knows where he's going. Now that's the difference between him and the men of the world.

This great destiny that he lies ahead of him. What a difference it makes from the aimlessness of life in the world today.

But you see it means that the Christian is an alien and misogynist. He is not only a foreigner he's a pilgrim.

[20 : 52] He has no abiding city. He seeks one to come. To him what he sees is temporal. However good it may be in itself there's a sense of impermanence that hangs over everything in this world.

But to a Christian's mind and heart the truths of God the verities of the gospel they are the eternal things they are the abiding things.

These are the marks of Christians. You want to know whether you're a Christian my friend? Do the things of God take hold of your heart like that? Can you sit a bit loose to the things of earth and say well yes while I'm here I need a few goods and chattels but the only things of passage like me all but to be one with him all but to know the love of his son all to be thrilled to that blessed saviour who died and rose for me and for the whole church.

These are the things that grip my soul. These are the things that I want to know and I want to understand. If that's how your heart feels there's no need for you to lack any assurance of yourself I think.

These are the hallmarks of a Christian. His perspective is right. His point of view. He knows he's a stranger here. He knows that he has a certain feeling of loneliness awkwardness the failure to fit in in the ways of this world.

[22 : 28] So I say if you find yourself out of step if you find yourself strange in the eyes of men don't be surprised.

Don't be worried and above all else don't be ashamed. If you are at one with God you're bound to be a stranger a stranger an alien a pilgrim in this world.

Yes Christians are pilgrims but the other thing is this they are also elect though they be in this world. Peter to the strangers elect or Peter to the elect strangers.

So far as these early Christians were concerned I think that the contrast on Peter's part is quite deliberate because his object in writing it seems to me is primarily pastoral.

His primary object in writing is to comfort unsettled and disquieted Christians to reassure them to help them get things into the right perspective and his concern with the doctrine here at this point is as it serves the practical need of the occasion.

[24 : 01] So that he says in effect well now outwardly as to the world as to all your temporal circumstances your strangers your aliens your pilgrims you're at a disadvantage in that way but inwardly inwardly as to God as to all eternal reality as to the things that last forever you are the elect you are chosen you are selected you are picked by the hand of God out of all the mass of humanity he has done it and you have not he has made you his people now I say what an antidote to unsettledness they were unsettled in the world but God gave them his word that they were his that his word is forever settled in heaven earth may be full of uncertainty but the people of God strangers he left and my friends the inward mark of every Christian pilgrim is that he is elect

I remind you again Peter to the elect strangers I'm not concerned this afternoon to argue or to expound or to prove the doctrine of election I approach the matter as Peter does here not abstractly as a doctrine but as a fact of Christian experience in the same breath he says to these dear people who are at all these various disadvantages strangers elect over against your disadvantage here's your advantage over against your uncertainty here is your certainty the one is as true as the other and the two are thrown together for the simple purpose of comforting the Christian soul that is unsettled by the troubles of his pilgrim path and that's the way

I put it to you the object of the doctrine of election as far as Christians are concerned is an object of comfort an object of consolation and I know nothing that so anchors the soul in the knowledge of God as this simple assurance that God has chosen him to eternal life that this is something that's stronger than a promise a promise waits fulfillment but this doesn't await fulfillment this is accomplished this is achieved it is done it doesn't depend on you it depends on God it means that those who enjoy the blessings of the gospel those who enjoy the saving benefits of pardon and eternal life in spite all their strangeness and trouble in this world they do so because

God in his free sovereign love and mercy from the beginning of the world chose them to this end doesn't it stagger you doesn't it baffle you doesn't it amaze you did you realize that if you're a Christian this has happened to you before ever you were a Christian before ever you were born strangers elect look at the way it's put elsewhere Paul says exactly the same thing as Peter writing to the Ephesians in chapter one he says at verse three blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ according as or as a result of choosing us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus

Christ to himself to the praise of the glory of his grace and what is it that Paul says to the Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13 we are bound to give thanks all way to God for you brethren beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth so you see Paul says exactly the same thing as Peter put Peter to the strangers elect according to the full knowledge of God the father through the sanctification of the spirit oh what a blessed privilege what an incomparable joy what a weapon with which to fight giant giant apollyon as he meets you in your pilgrim path the question is not do you understand it you can no more understand this than you can understand the height and depth and length and breadth of everlasting love no more than you can know that love that passeth knowledge yet here it is every heaven bound pilgrim passing through the world is chosen of God from before the foundation of the world has his name written in the

[30 : 15] Lamb's book of life has the hand of God upon him in this unique this peculiar this strange this utterly astonishing matter are you a pilgrim you are elect are you a stranger you are chosen the two things together apparently opposite look at your pilgrimage and its immediate circumstances alone it's full of uncertainty it's full of danger it's full of darkness and my dear Christian friends do we not too often pay too much attention to the one side and none to the other there is the opposite danger and I'm constantly pointing out these opposites and these extremes to you there are some Christians who lean back and say yes I'm elect I'm secure I've no more uncertainty no more trouble no more joy and on they go with a sense of irresponsibility they don't face up to the responsibilities of a pilgrim path no it isn't the one and it isn't the other some of us I suppose in terms of natural temperament natural disposition will incline one way some will incline the other way some of us also have a temperament that's liable to be flustered and all the troubles and the uncertainties of the pilgrim path will tend to get us down others of us perhaps may have a more buoyant spirit a more equable kind of spirit that is more stable and we'll shettle on the glorious doctrine of election and say there it is thank God for it we're not alive to all the issues of the pilgrim path and the danger of that of course is that Apollyon can come along and can sometimes get a temporary victory over us

Peter to the strangers who are elect here it is the God who makes us misfits in this world fits us for another world the God who leaves us in our life surrounded by uncertainties in this sea provides us with certainties in the finished work in Christ and of course the object of it all the object of this glorious doctrine of election in its practical application is that we should be strengthened with armor for the battle for the pilgrimage do you realize that and if you do are you not staggered by the provision that is made does it not call you to say why me why me far from leading to slackness and provokes to earnestness in the battle elect it will make you sit back and say

I owe nothing to God it will make you stand up and say because he has given me this I owe him everything I ought in return of love and effect to give him heart and mind and soul and strength in his service these are the things that make a Christian able to face his pilgrimage these are things that enable a Christian to face life in this world they put his feet on the rock they put a new song in his mouth they give him ground to glorify his blood Peter an apostle to the strangers!

he left oh my friends don't let the stranger category worry you over against that by grace you have something far greater to place that sets your feet on the rock that assures you the faithfulness of your love the Lord bless his word and bless our hearts in the strength of it Amen Now may the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost rest upon and abide with us and with all the people of God everywhere this day and forever more Amen

Eck