

# “Strangers in the World!”

## 1 Peter 1:1-2

**Intro.** – “Strangers in the world.” What an odd phrase to use for Christians. The word used here literally means “a person who will stay for awhile in a place they cannot call home.” These believers in Northern Turkey were “aliens” in their own land. They were exiles, not by economics, race, gender or nationality. They were exiles because of their faith in Christ. They were homeless in their own homes; displaced in their own places.

Look at what 1 Peter 4:3-4 says: “*For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.*” NASB says, “...they are surprised that you do not run with them.”

I believe we need to tell young people in particular that if you will hold up Christian values and do what is right and moral that the world will walk right up to and say: “*You’re one weird dude!*” The idea that if you stand up for Christian values/standards in a hostile culture, that culture will respect you is foolish. Peter says, you stand up for what is right/moral and the world will heap abuse on you and call you strange.

Peter himself was a displaced person; so, the purpose behind the book of 1 Peter is to answer the question: How do you live faithfully in a culture that is essentially hostile to Christ and His Church?

*Purpose: to answer that question: How do you live faithfully in a culture hostile to Christ*

The first two verses of this book tell us how: we do this by remembering who we are!

## I REMEMBER CHRISTIANS ARE AN ALIEN PEOPLE

- Illus. – there is a great book entitled *Resident Aliens* written by Wm Willimon/Stanly Hauerwas. In this book they write: “In baptism, our citizenship is transferred from one dominion to another and we become in whatever culture we find ourselves resident aliens.”
- A. Christians Are Resident Aliens
  1. We’re not aliens in the sense we don’t live here. We do live here... but we don’t belong here!
  2. Let me explain it this way: we’re aliens to this culture even though we may have been born in this area... even though our mail comes here... even though this is where we earn our living...
  3. 1 Peter 1:17 “*And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during your stay upon the earth.*”
- B. Christians are Invited to be Different
  1. Christianity is an invitation to be a part of an alien people who live differently because they see something in Jesus the world fails to see.
  2. I ask, is this how you are living? Does your life show the world something different?!
  3. Must confess there are days I get mighty comfortable, feeling very *at home* here:
    - a. i.e. I struggle with being too comfortable in my “feeling” like this is home
    - b. Illus. – ... “Paul, you just don’t understand because you’re not a native.” I realize now this wasn’t a put-down (though intended to be so) = half truth said in ignorance...
  4. Recently, I have an increasing sense of alienation living in our culture:
    - a. when I hear of a woman in Florida who was peacefully demonstrating at an abortion clinic, then given 5 yrs sentence at a maximum-security prison; that same judge, that same day sentenced two convicted murders for four years at a minimum-security prison – I sense I really am an alien in this land!
    - b. when I hear at the U. of Washington a professor stands up in class and states that lesbians make the best mothers and when a student dared to publically oppose that view -- the school does not reprimand the professor but expels the student, I really sense just how much this world is not my home. Don’t you?
  5. Brethren, we live here... but my question to you is this – Do we belong here?

### C. Christians are to be Like Christ

1. What Peter wants us to learn is that God Himself was a stranger when He was in this world:
2. John 1:10-13 *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*
3. Note: they didn’t crucify Jesus because He upheld the values of the culture... the Cross is a constant reminder that Jesus was an outsider, an alien...
4. Peter affirms our status as rejected people...; secondly, he asserts our status as elected people!

## II REMEMBER CHRISTIANS ARE AN ELECTED PEOPLE

### A. God Has Chosen Us

1. Doesn’t mean that God before creation said, “I’m going to save this person and condemn that...”
2. Peter makes this clear in Acts 2 when he pleads with people to *save themselves from this corrupt generation...* by accepting the grace of God. Also in Acts 10 says *God is not a respecter of persons.*
3. Peter saying we must confront the faulty premise that says you can tell you belong to God by how well your life is going:
  - a. Peter saying such is NOT how we can tell if we belong to God
  - b. Peter affirms that God determined to create a people for Himself – *“...for obedience to Jesus Christ...”*
  - c. it simply means we are to respond to the grace made available by His Cross!
  - d. all 3 persons (Father, Son, Spirit) play roles in our redemption: Father planned it... Son sealed it on Cross... Spirit works it through sanctification...
4. Peter is saying if we’re getting pressure/hostility from world, don’t let anyone tell you this is proof you don’t belong to God – exact opposite is true!

### B. God Knows it isn’t Easy

1. God is more than aware it isn’t easy being a Christian in this hostile culture.
2. Hebrews 4:15 *“We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.”*
3. How we need to remember God, in His *foreknowledge* has “chosen us”
  - a. Illus. – remember choosing teams as a kid...? Remember what it was like to be chosen?!
  - b. Peter is saying, “The world is telling Christians to keep to themselves and live Christianity in private... but God picked you; so don’t be fearful to stand next to God...!”
4. Such is hard to do for most people however, because most choose not to stand with God!

## III REMEMBER CHISTIANS ARE GRACE PEOPLE

### A. Peter Understood God’s Grace

1. Who had a better testimony to give than did Peter concerning God’s grace? He knew firsthand how hard it was to be faithful, to live in a hostile culture and take a stand for Jesus!
2. Peter had been there before and had failed miserably:
  - a. but this is where Peter learned of the power of God’s grace
  - b. Peter learned that God forgives and gives strength so that next time enabled to stand for X!
3. “Grace and peace” is far more than a greeting. Grace is mentioned in every chapter!
  - God’s grace will not keep you from suffering nor will He take hostile people totally away; instead, God of grace will make you stronger, firm and steadfast in the midst of hostile world!

### B. Peter’s Purpose is Clear

1. 1 Peter 5:12 *“... I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”*
2. This is a book that’s all about *standing firm in the grace of God* in a hostile world – by God’s grace we can be who we are called to be *peculiar people, set apart for His glory.*
3. Such will lead to the application of this text and summary to this message:

**Conclusion:** After we are told in these first two verses who we are: (1 we're an alien people; 2) we're a chosen people; 3) we're a grace people. This means living our lives a certain way in a hard/hostile world:

1) We Will Keep HOPE Alive

- won't last long as a stranger in the world without hope! Throughout this epistle, Peter reminds us we have an unquenchable hope grounded in the reality of what God has, is and will do for us!
- Christian hope is NOT "hope so" – e.g. when asked are you headed to heaven don't say "I hope so" = we're have confidence based upon the hope of grace!
- "hope" is not a sedative... it is a shot of adrenaline! It's important motive behind our living!

2) We Will Live HOLY Lives

- as aliens/strangers in the world, we feel out of place because we are!... The temptation when one is out of place is to accommodate, compromise so that you *fit in*
- Peter throughout this epistle instructs Christians NOT to compromise/accommodate; instead, we are called to demonstrate to the world an entirely different approach to living!
- only way world is going to know it is broken and needs major overhauling is if it compares itself to a radical alternative = precisely what Christians are here to do.
- 1 Peter 2:11-12 *"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."*
- our instructions for living in this hostile world is NOT for Christians to huddle up and make our own little utopia here on earth. We're instructed to get out in/among the world and give them something to consider rather than an excuse for ignoring the God of Creation!

There was a missionary couple who had spent over three decades in Africa during later part of 19<sup>th</sup> century on into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They came home after telling these people about Jesus... they lived in poverty and sacrificed much. They happen to be on the same ship that a celebrity was on after returning from an African safari. As the boat docked in New York and the passengers began to disembark, a crowd of thousands gathered to greet the celebrity, but not a single person came to greet this couple returning from the mission field. The husband began to voice his disappointment. He said to his wife, "Isn't that something. We spend over thirty years of our lives telling people how to go to heaven and nobody seems to care. Then, a man goes over there with a big gun, shoots a few animals and they throw a ticker tape parade when he returns."

His wife wisely responded, "But, Honey. We're not home yet."