

1 Peter Introduction

1 Peter 1:1-2

1 Peter was written to Christians with whom we would have plenty in common: Peter calls them exiles; they were grappling with how to live in a society that was increasingly hostile to the Christian faith; they faced the issue of suffering.

This morning we are just going to look at the opening two verses and they are an excellent way to start the New Year. Peter writes about himself, the Christians he is writing to, and God.

Peter: In front of you is a letter written by Peter, a man who Jesus set apart to be an apostle. He was a man with a message, who spent his life for the cause of Christ. All of us are messengers for something. We all spend our lives on something. And Peter knew what it was to suffer for Christ, so when he talks about suffering he knows what he's talking about.

And Peter's own name change from Simon to Peter, and the fact that he is writing this letter at all, is an indication of the transformation that can happen through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whatever personal defeats marked the past year for you, the gospel of Christ is your hope for 2010, just as it was for Peter before you.

The Christians he is writing to: Peter describes them in 3 ways: they are elect, they are exiles and they are part of the dispersion.

Originally, the Dispersion referred to Jews scattered across the world. But now Peter includes gentile Christians in this great scattering of God's people. You can view this dispersion as a thing of weakness: God's people are scattered. In fact God uses the scattering of His people to spread the gospel. So though it can be hard to stand up for Christ when you are the only Christian you can set your hope on God because you are part of this deliberate scattering of His people as seed throughout the world.

But they're not just dispersed. They're also exiles. Exiles because God has saved them from the world and now they see things very differently from those around them.

And Peter calls them and us: *elect* exiles. 'Elect' means chosen and called out. If you are a Christian, God has chosen you and called you out of the world. Not because you were better than anyone else, but simply because He is a God of grace who chooses people like us who don't deserve it.

God: without using the word Peter tells us God is a trinity and each Person is involved in our salvation. We are chosen by God the Father's foreknowledge. But He also foreknew that these Christians would be exiles, so He also foreknows every circumstance of your life. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us. He makes us holy: holy in the sight of God in Christ and increasingly holy in our conduct. And then we are sprinkled by the blood of Christ. The blood of Jesus shed on the cross fulfils every Old Testament sacrifice: it redeems us, brings us into covenant relationship with God, cleanses us and earns our forgiveness from every sin.

Knowing these things, and the power of them is why peter can end this greeting with: 'Grace and Peace be multiplied to you.' May that be the case for us in 2010.