

The Best Vacation Ever #1

Series: This World Is Not Our Home

I Peter 1:1-12

Introduction: Years ago, Nancy and I and our girls went on a vacation traveling through western North Carolina, and Tennessee that we named the best vacation ever. It's not that it was actually the best vacation ever, it's just that everywhere we went...waterfalls, restaurants, ice cream or candy shops, they were all self-declared as the best ever.

Going on vacation can be a very pleasurable experience...if you know where you're going and what to expect when you get there. But not everybody does.

Travel agents have told stories about people who misunderstood those things:

* One agent said: "I had someone ask for an aisle seat on their airplane so that their hair wouldn't get messed up by being near the window."

* Another said he had a client who called inquiring about a package to Hawaii. After going over all the cost information, she asked "Would it be cheaper to fly to California and then take the train to Hawaii?"

* Still another agent said he got a call from a woman who said she wanted to go to Cape Town. He started to describe the length of the flight to Africa and the passport information when she interrupted saying: "I'm not trying to make you look stupid, but Cape Town is in Massachusetts."

He explained, "Cape COD is in Massachusetts, Cape Town is in South Africa."

She hung up.

* One man called his travel agent, furious about a Florida package they'd done for him. The agent asked what was wrong with the vacation in Orlando. The man responded that he was expecting an ocean-view room.

The agent tried to explain that it wasn't possible - Orlando is in the middle of the state. The man replied, "Don't lie to me. I looked at the map and Florida is a very thin state."

* A very nice lady called her agent. She wanted to know how it was possible that her flight from Detroit left at 8:20am and got into Chicago at 8:33am. The agent tried to tell her that Michigan was an hour ahead of Illinois, but she could not understand the concept of Time zones. Finally, he told her the plane went very fast, and she was ok with that!

I figured that from military assignments to missions' trips to family vacations, I've been to over 30 states and over 20 of the 195 countries in the world. Nothing to brag about, but I've seen some beautiful sights and witnessed some of God's beautiful creations, and amazing man-made structures. But I can honestly say that I agree with Dorothy from Kansas, there's no place like home. I like the comfort and familiarity of my house, my bed, my shower, and my toilet...AMEN!

I'm beginning a Summer Sermon Series today from the book of 1 Peter called, **"This World is Not Our Home."**

So, turn with me to 1 Peter 1:1-12

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Praise to God for a Living Hope

3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even

though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

10Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.” (NIV)

Before we get into the message, let’s do a quick, Who, What, When, and Where about this book.

1 Peter is the second of what is sometimes known as the General Epistles. The books of James through Jude are lumped together in a separate category for a couple of reasons. They were not written by Paul. They are not addressed to a specific locale. Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy and other books were addressed to Christians in a specific city or to a specific Christian leader.

TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN: "To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, to the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." These were believing Jews, Christians, born-again Jewish people. James wrote his letter to the same people, "To the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad." (James 1:1)

Early Christian tradition claims that the book was written from Rome shortly before Peter was put to death under the brutal persecution of Emperor Nero. That would place it in the mid 60's of the first century. A reign of terror began in the capital city when Christians were falsely blamed for a major fire in Rome.

Historians speculate that Nero himself ordered the burning because he wanted to build a new palace. He needed an excuse, so he said that Christians had started the fire. He argued that if the city wanted the blessings of the gods, they would have to act against the Christian infidels.

The brutality that followed was unbelievable. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote, "Besides being put to death, [Christians] were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed" (Annales 15.44).

It was during this intense persecution; the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Peter to write a letter of hope and encouragement. Chuck Swindoll calls his study on this book, 'Hope in Hurtful Times' while Warren Wiersbe entitles his, 'Be Hopeful'. I'm calling it, '**This World is NOT Our Home**'.

Believers who could, scattered far and wide to escape the persecution. Peter remained in Rome. Tradition says he would be crucified upside down within a year or two of the beginning of the persecution.

Peter as an apostle had unique authority. He wants them to know this letter carries weight. Peter was the vocal leader of the disciples. He has been a fisherman, worked with his hands, smelled like Old Spice and fish. He was the one quick to speak. His personality in the gospels is brash and outspoken.

Peter knew what it was like to watch Jesus suffer, and Peter also knew what it was like to experience life in the fullness of the Spirit and to suffer for Jesus. So as Peter addresses suffering and persecution in this letter, he does so from a unique perspective.

The concluding paragraph credits help from Silas (Silvanus, the Latin name in some translations).

FOUR THEMES RUN THROUGH I PETER

1. GOD'S GRACE AND SALVATION
2. GOD'S GRACE AND SUBMISSION

3. GOD'S GRACE AND SUFFERING

4. GOD'S GRACE AND THE SECOND COMING

Paul was the apostle of faith. John is the apostle of love. But Simon Peter is the apostle of hope.

You may recall that Simon Peter before the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified denied that he even knew the Lord, and probably a sense of great hopelessness came upon his heart in the midst of that failure. But then he received a Word after the resurrection, "Go tell my disciples and Simon Peter that I will meet them in Galilee." His hope was rekindled in spite of his failure.

Simon Peter, the apostle of hope, is writing to a group of individuals and he calls them the strangers scattered, and he mentions five countries that today are comprised of modern Turkey. He's writing to a group of Christian believers who are encountering the brunt of initial persecution and hostility to their faith. Many of them are wondering, ***'Is there any hope? Are the promises of God really true?'***

Simon Peter starts off this epistle of hope in a very interesting way. He starts off by making it very clear who we are as believers. If you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, these first two verses tell you who you are. It's important to know who you are in Christ, because that's the basis of your hope.

He tells us first that we need to know who we are as far as this world is concerned, and we need to know who we are as far as God is concerned.

I. Our Earthly Position

You will notice in verse 1 he gives us our earthly position, and he does it with two important words. He says, ***"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the exiles scattered."***

The word that is used here means someone who is a temporary resident in a land to which they do not belong. You could use the word alien or the word stranger. He is writing to them geographically, first, because he names these five countries. Peterson paraphrases it. He says, 'To the exiles who are scattered to the four winds.'

Believers are scattered everywhere. You need to understand that spiritually speaking, you are an alien and a stranger in this world. You are an exile here. You are a temporary resident here. This is not your permanent home.

In the book of the Revelation there is a rather interesting phrase. It is a phrase which says, 'Them that dwell on the earth, the earth dwellers.' That phrase is a statement of those who do not know the Lord. They are earth dwellers.

In other words, they live on this earth. They live in this world, and this is the only world they will ever know. This is the only residence they will ever have. They are earth dwellers.

But the Bible says that born again believers are strangers, aliens, temporary residents. We don't belong here. Philippians 3: 20, says, "**For our citizenship is in heaven.**"

When you travel abroad, there is much to do. There are places to see and there are pictures to take and souvenirs to buy and food to taste. In your hotel you have a suitcase, and it's not completely unpacked because you are aware that you're just there for a little while. You really don't mind some of the inconveniences and discomforts because you know it is temporary.

We are not only aliens, but we are to be ambassadors in this world. We are on a journey, and we are inviting others to come and go on with us. That's the purpose of our life as born-again believers. "I'm a stranger here within a foreign land. My home is far away upon a golden strand. Ambassadors to be of life beyond the sea. I'm here on business for my king."

The first thing you need to know about yourself is that you have an earthly position. You are a scattered stranger. In verse 2 he tells us the second thing we need to understand is that we have a heavenly position.

II. Our Eternal Position.

We are God's elect. The word elect means to pick out. It means to choose.

Do you remember when you were in elementary school and they were choosing teams? Do you remember how you felt when you were hoping you would be

chosen? Do you remember when somebody picked you, how special you felt? 'I have been chosen.'

The word elect means to be picked, to be chosen. We are special. What Peter is trying to say to you and me on this journey with Jesus into hope is that you and I are not only strangers, temporary residents down here, but in terms of eternity, we are very special and important to God.

There is no room for a child of God to feel insignificant, unimportant, or hopeless because Jesus died for you while you far from Him.

God calls us strangers, pilgrims, and sojourners. And so, we are living in hostile territory. We are sailing through troubled waters and there is danger lurking around every corner. We are in this world, but we are not of this world.

A. SELECTED BY THE LORD

Verse 2, says, "***who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.***" (NIV)

Here you see the work of the Trinity in our salvation. You see that God the Father ***thought*** it and God the Holy Spirit wrought it and God the Son ***bought*** it through His blood shed on Calvary's cross.

The Bible teaches here that you were not an afterthought of God. You were not an accident. God in His foreknowledge knew how you would respond when presented with the Good News about Jesus Christ. That is why this world is not your home.

The Bible says here in verse 2 that we were chosen by the foreknowledge of God, through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit unto obedience. God's Spirit came to convict us and to show us our need of Jesus Christ. And we responded by obeying the voice of the Spirit. That doesn't mean that God chose some to be saved and some to be lost, it doesn't mean that you didn't have a choice in your salvation. God knows who will respond and who will not respond. And so,

you still had a part. Your part was obedience. Your part was faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is free but it is free because Jesus has purchased it with His blood.

B. SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Notice the second thing in verse 1 and you will see that you are scattered throughout the world. He says, Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. We are scattered as strangers he says.

C. SECURE FROM THE WORLD

The Bible says here that we are scattered throughout the world and then notice it also tells us we are secure from the world. We are to be in the world but not of the world. And praise God while we are in the world; we are secure from the world. Jesus said, Father I don't pray that you take them out of the world; I pray that you will keep them from the world. And how does He do it? Look in verse 3, ***'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ' (NIV)***

Notice some things about our assurance today.

1. **It is rooted in mercy.** Notice he says, according to His great mercy. There are some people who feel you can lose your salvation. Well, that depends on how you are saved. If you get salvation by good works, then you can lose your salvation by bad works. But if you get salvation by the mercy and the grace of God, then it depends upon the mercy and the grace of God for you to continue in salvation.
2. **Just as you are saved by grace, you are kept by grace and by the power of God.** The Bible says, according to His great mercy. And that which is a gift of mercy cannot ever be taken away by the lack of merit. We would all be in hell tonight if it depended upon our worthiness of salvation. Because the Bible says all have come short of the glory of God, there is

none that doeth righteous, no not one. We are all here today by God's amazing grace. Our security is rooted in mercy.

We were selected by the Lord, we are scattered throughout the world, and we are secure while in the world. Notice that in verses 4 & 5, that we are satisfied without the world.

D. SATISFIED WITHOUT THE WORLD

Verse 4 says, *'and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, '*

You don't have to take what this world gives to be satisfied. In fact, what this world gives can never satisfy. We have a fallen nature. And we still desire the things of this world. And the things of this world can have a hold on our lives. But what we discover is what the writer of Ecclesiastes discovered and that is this, even after he had taken of all the things of this world, he said it is all vanity. Only Jesus can satisfy.

So, what is a Christian? He is someone selected by the Lord, he is someone scattered throughout the world, he is someone secure while in the world, he is someone satisfied without the world, he is someone who may suffer in the world, but last of all he is going to be saved out of the world.

E. SAVED OUT OF THE WORLD

Look at verse 7 and following, he says, *'These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.'* (NIV)

The goal toward which you are reaching, toward which you are traveling is the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is all heading for that time when we are going to see Him face to face.

Conclusion:

Peter reminds us that we are "strangers in the world." We don't belong here. This isn't our home. We were born again to live somewhere else. And IF we don't remember that, we can get truly frustrated in this life.

Jesus told us - ***"In this world you will have trouble"*** John 16:33

And here Peter tells the Christians the same thing: ***"...for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."*** 1 Peter 1:6

Peter acknowledges the pain... but then he explains WHY we should rejoice about that. He writes: ***"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."*** 1 Peter 1:6-7

ILLUS: NEW YEAR'S is a celebration that is the focus of almost every nation on the face of the earth. It doesn't matter if you vacation in New York or Tel Aviv or Tokyo seemingly everybody everywhere celebrates the New Year. It's a celebration that symbolizes starting their lives over again.

And what tool do people use to try to remake their lives? RESOLUTIONS that they believe will change their lives for the better. Do those resolutions change people? Sometimes, but most don't last more than thirty days. They just don't seem to work. Why not? Because the success of resolutions depends upon OUR willpower.

But Peter tells us that the change in our lives doesn't depend upon YOUR willpower, because you have received a ***"new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."*** (1 Peter 1:3)

God tells us our ability to change our lives comes because God works inside us. It's a change that doesn't come about because we've made a PLEDGE but because God has made a PROMISE embodied in the resurrection of Jesus.

And because our best blessings are in heaven, ***We have an inheritance that "... can never perish, spoil or fade- kept in heaven for you"***

Take-Aways:

1. This world is not our home.

- This world's values are not mine.
- This world's humor is not mine.
- This world's idea of success is not mine.
- This world's perspective on life, love, family, sex and marriage are not mine.

The tragedy for us is when we fall in love with the things of this world and begin to define ourselves according to this world's values. It is a tragedy because to be at home in this world.

(1 John 2.15-17 – ‘Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world-the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life-is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.’

We are not supposed to love this world. We should not feel like we belong here, but when you feel like you don't belong, you start to question your identity.

If we are going to live successfully as temporary residents, exiles or aliens then we need a firm grasp of who we are and whose we are.

2. WE BELONG TO GOD

This is not just a typical greeting that you dispense with so that you can rush into the rest of the letter. Peter wanted them to know who they were. He wanted them to know whose they were.

At the very start he lays a foundation for hope and belonging. It rests in the simple and comforting fact that we belong to Jesus. We may not belong here, but we do belong to Him. God has chosen us.

Think about it for a minute. Here you have people, believers, like you and me, who did not belong. They did not fit in. They were not wanted. They were pushed out and pushed aside and rejected by this world, but they were wanted, chosen and delighted in by God.

You have been chosen by God. You belong to Him. - You have been set apart by God. You have been given a new identity in Jesus Christ. - You have been bought by the blood of Jesus. You have been cleansed.

3. WE HAVE BEEN SET APART FOR A PURPOSE

They have been dispersed and placed alongside unbelievers. They were placed there for a purpose. While we are here, in a land that is not our home, we are here as ambassadors and representatives of God.

ILLUS: A historian named Rodney Stark wrote a book called "The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World's Largest Religion."

He explained that in 165 A.D. a plague struck the Roman Empire. Now, when plagues came to town, those who could, left town. Those who couldn't get out of town did everything they could to avoid the sick.

Everybody seemed to run away. Even physicians like the famous Roman doctor named Galen... simply ran away. **But the Christians didn't.**

They cared for their own sick and... for many of their neighbors. Why would they do that? **First**, Jesus had taught them that mercy was the highest form of Godliness.

And 2nd - they didn't fear death. They had an inheritance kept in heaven that wouldn't perish, spoil or fade. They believed that if they died while caring for the ill the result for them would be glorious.

And because the Christians of that day refused to fear death when helping the sick, they not only kept a vast number of fellow Christians and others from dying, but they caught the attention of the rest of culture. They literally shook the world because of their self-sacrifice.

In other words, EVEN our present difficulties in life have value for us. And the reason they have value for us is because we have been given so much.

1. We are the "elect" - God has chosen us out of this world to be His people
2. We have been sanctified by the Spirit - set apart from the world (vs. 2)
3. We have been saved by being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus (vs. 2)
4. We have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ
5. We have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefined, and unfading, kept in heaven for us (vs. 4)
6. We are guarded by God's power for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (vs. 5)

You've got things the rest of the world does not. It's like the best vacation ever.