**ENGAGE! (A Study in 1 Peter)**

 **LIVING AND PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL IN TODAY’S MORAL, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL CLIMATE.**

**Week 3: Engaging Our World Because of Who We Are**

***Introductory Remarks:***

***Sample 0utlines of the Opening Section of 1 Peter:***

(From *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* by Thomas R. Schreiner, NAC)

1. Opening (1:1-2)
2. Called to Salvation as Exiles (1:3-2:10)
3. Praise for Salvation (1:3-12)
4. The Future Inheritance as an Incentive to Holiness (1:13-21)
5. Living as the New People of God (1:22-2:10)

(Taken from *1 Peter*, by Wayne Grudem, TOTC)

1. Salutation: Peter the Apostle to Sojourners in God’s Eternal Care (1:1-2
2. General Doctrine: The Greatness of Your Salvation (1:3-2:10)
3. You grow as Christians through joyful faith (1:3-12)
4. Joy in future heavenly reward (1:3-5)
5. Joy in spite of suffering (1:6-7)
6. Inexpressible joy in knowing Christ himself (1:8-9)
7. Prophets and angels amazed at the glory of your salvation (1:10-12)
8. Application: You must be holy in all your conduct (1:13-25)
9. Desire the beauty of being like a holy God (1:13-16)
10. Fear the displeasure of a Father who is an impartial Judge (1:17-21)
11. 3. Love one another, now and forever (1:22-25)
12. How to advance in holiness (2:1-10)
13. Be nourished by the Lord through the Word (2:1-3)
14. Abide in Christ—together—as the new temple of God (2:4-6)
15. Unbelievers reject Christ and stumble (2:7-8)
16. But you are joined with Christ to be blessed as the true people of God (2:9-10)

***You Are Elect Exiles (1:1-2):***

* 1 Peter opens with a greeting that is filled with truths we will see throughout the book. Peter identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word “apostle” could carry the meaning simply of a “messenger.” However, Jesus had chosen twelve of his disciples to be apostles in a very special sense. To hold this office was to have an authority like that of the Old Testament prophets who could speak and write God’s very words (Acts 5:3-4; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 14:37; 2 Corinthians 13:3; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 4:8, 15; 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; 2 Peter 3:2, 16; Revelation 22:18-19). Therefore, Peter is letting these believers know from the outset that he writes to them in this authoritative role. His words are the words of God and should be received in that way.
* Peter writes to Christians that he calls “elect exiles of the Dispersion.” This is a description that is loaded with meaning. It describes both their relationship with God and with the society in which they live. With regard to God, they are chosen by him to be his special people. In regard to the present society in which they live, they are foreigners living in land that is not their true home. They are temporary residents of a foreign country who are to live out their time in exile as the chosen people of God. Both of these things are important in Peter’s message to these Christians.
* To live and proclaim the gospel in the midst of our current moral, cultural, and political realities, we must understand what it means to be God’s special chosen exiles. We must know who we are in Christ and see ourselves in that way. Our entire lives are to be defined by this new special relationship with God. Therefore, Peter spends the entire first chapter and the first ten verses of chapter two describing our great salvation. We must be firmly convinced of who we are in Christ and see all of life from that perspective.

*“Those who understand themselves as God’s elect have the ammunition to resist the norms and culture of the society they inhabit. Divine election reminds the readers that they have status, not because they are so worthy or noble but because God has bestowed his grace upon them. Hence, they have the energy to counter accepted cultural norms and to live in accord with God’s purpose.”* (Schreiner, *1 Peter*)

* “…of the Dispersion...” – The term “diaspora” (Dispersion) held a great deal of meaning for the Jews of this time. It called to mind the Babylonian exile and was still used of those Jews who continued to live outside of Palestine. With the reference to the “Diaspora” in 1:1 and to “Babylon” in 5:12, it is clear that Peter wants his readers to make a connection to the Diaspora of the Jewish people. This connection invites these Christian exiles/sojourners of Asia Minor to see their own situation as connected with that of God’s people in ancient Israel. Such connections between these Christians and God’s word to the Israelites in the Old Testament are common in 1 Peter. Peter takes the covenant language of the Old Testament and applies it to these Christians in a way that emphasizes their inclusion in the people of God and all that goes along with that blessing.
* *“…in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia…”--*  These five names represent Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Three of the names refer to individual provinces (Galatia, Cappadocia, Bithynia), while the other two together formed a single province called “Bithynia and Pontus.” It is commonly suggested that the names describe a route that could have been followed by the bearer of Peter’s letter (Silvanus, 5:12). It is interesting, however, to see how much of modern Turkey is included when we consider this letter from Peter along with Paul’s missionary journeys and the churches addressed in the book of Revelation (Revelation 2-3).
* *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.”* – What we see in this description is a powerful statement regarding how these Christians came to be “elect exiles.” They are, in the first place, “elect exiles” because of the “foreknowledge of God the Father.” This means more than just that God knew beforehand what they would do. It emphasizes God’s personal knowledge of them. His decision to love them and enter into a relationship with them from before the foundation of the world. It involves God’s setting his love upon them and bringing them into a relationship with himself (Romans 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; see also the meaning of “know” in Genesis 18:19; Jeremiah 1:5; Amos 3:2; John 10:14; 1 Corinthians 8:3; 2 Timothy 2:19).
* They are also “elect exiles” through the “sanctification of the Spirit.” This also seems to refer to the work of God in saving his people from their sin. They are God’s holy people because of the work of the Spirit. While sanctification is often spoken of as the process by which we become holy during our Christian lives, this phrase is probably emphasizing the fact that we become God’s sanctified (holy) people at the moment of our conversion. This can never be separated from the process of actually being made holy throughout our Christian lives as Peter will make clear (see 1 Peter 3:13-16), but serves as another reminder that God has set them apart as his people through the work of the Holy Spirit in their conversion. We are to see our salvation as a gracious work of the Holy Spirit. That same Spirit continues to work in us as we live out our salvation as “elect exiles” in this world.
* The final phrase is “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.” – This phrase emphasizes that we are saved into a new covenant which is based on the blood of Jesus Christ. It seems most natural to take this phrase as expressing a single idea. Thus we are speaking of the connection between “obedience to Jesus Christ” and “sprinkling with his blood.” The background is almost certainly the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant in Exodus 24:3-8. In that passage we see that this newly established people of God first pledge their obedience (24:3, 7) and then are sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice (24:8). In this we see both sides of the covenant being expressed. The people pledge to obey God and his laws and the blood of the covenant is applied to them. If this is the case, then what we have in 1 Peter 1:2 is an emphasis on God establishing this covenant relationship with these believers. Perhaps it has a similar emphasis as what we see in Romans 1:5 when we read that Paul saw his apostolic ministry as bringing about the “obedience of faith” among the Gentiles. The gospel is a message that brings people into a covenant relationship with God. What was foreshadowed in Exodus 24 is now made complete in Jesus Christ.
* Peter’s prayer wish for them is that God’s “grace and peace” would be multiplied to them. In doing this, Peter is expressing the fact that we are constantly in need of God’s free and unmerited favor as well as the sense of peace and wholeness that only God can provide. Grace and peace are also characteristic of Paul’s greetings to the church (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3).

***Praising God for our great salvation (1:3-12)***

***Our living hope (1:3-5)***

* The opening words “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” reminds us of similar words of praise used throughout the Old Testament (Genesis 14:20; 24:27; Ruth 4:14; 1 Samuel 25:32; 1 Kings 1:48; Psalm 28:6; 31:21; 41:13). However, it is now expressed in New Covenant terms with the expression “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The anticipatory praise of the Old Covenant has now been fully revealed in what we have in Jesus Christ. It is also important to note that we are only children of God because the one unique Son of God has provided us with the forgiveness and cleansing we needed to be brought into God’s family.
* *“…According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again…”* – We can never forget or minimize that fact that we have been born again because of God’s merciful work in our hearts. How did we become children of God? God caused it to happen because he looked upon us with mercy and gave us new life. This should call forth the praise that verse 3 begins with.
* *“…to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead…” –* What God has given us by causing us to be born again is a hope that is living and active. This is a hope that grows and increases as the years go by. As we shall see, this hope is fixed on the certainty of what we will receive when Christ comes again. It looks forward to the time when we are able to enjoy the fullness of the salvation that God has for us. And such a hope has everything to do with how we live today as the book of 1 Peter makes clear. All of this has come about because of “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” His resurrection secures for us all that we receive because of God’s merciful work in saving us.
* What God has secured for us through his Son includes *“an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you…”* Once again, the certainty, permanence, and security of our hope is emphasized in these words. This inheritance is “imperishable.” It is not subject to decay over time. This term is used a number of times to describe eternal realities including God himself (Romans 1:23; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 9:25; 1 Peter 3:4). Our inheritance is also “undefiled.” It is completely unstained by sin or Satan (Hebrews 7:26; 13:4; James 1:27). It is perfect and completely reflects the purity of God. Our inheritance is also “unfading.” It never loses its beauty and glory (1 Peter 5:4). Unlike earthly things, it doesn’t fade or grow old over time. And our inheritance is “kept in heaven” for us. It is as secure as God. He keeps It for us and we can be certain that we shall receive it when we go to be with him forever.
* But it’s not only our inheritance that is being kept securely by God, it is also us. We *“by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* We not only have something that is secure when our lives on this earth are over, but we ourselves are being kept securely by God during this life. God guards us. He carefully watches over us (Psalm 1:6) and keeps us safe. Therefore, we can live with confidence and a feeling of complete security now. Even when we have to face tough trials and persecutions, we can rest in the fact that God has our future and our present securely in his hands.
* Does this mean that we should sit back and do nothing? Absolutely not! It is also “*through faith”* that this happens. We are to be completely active participants in this process. We are being kept by God which is our ultimate security, but he keeps us by working through our faith (which is also a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). We continue to live by faith as God continues to work in us as he has promised until Christ comes again (Philippians 1:6). Thus we are fully involved in this life as we look forward to the next.
* *“..for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* As Christians, we are to be a future oriented people. Our eyes are fixed on what lasts for eternity. Peter makes that abundantly clear in this book. Here he emphasizes that we are being kept for a salvation that is yet to be revealed. It is the future aspect of our salvation. It is the final and complete fulfillment and experience of all that God has saved us for (Romans 13:11; 1 Peter 2:2). Here we find one of the constant emphases of 1 Peter. We are people whose eyes are fixed on eternity and that has everything to do with how we live now. Even when, if necessary, we are distressed with various trials (1 Peter 1:6). We are to live as people who know who we are and what we have in Christ now, with our eyes fully fixed on who we will be and what we shall fully experience in Christ for all eternity. Such a perspective is to shape our entire existence in this world.