

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Select Sojourners Dispersed According To God's Foreknowledge

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“Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ to select sojourners of dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia² according to foreknowledge of Father God in sanctification of Spirit unto hearing-under-obedience and sprinkling of blood of Messiah Jesus, grace and peace be multiplied to y'all.”

1 Peter 1:1,2

Simon Peter is probably the best known of Jesus' disciples. He was zealous and committed, one of the most outspoken and exuberant of the apostles. He was the first to really grasp and confess who Jesus really was, ...the Christ, the Messiah, the Davidic king. This was a revelation from God Himself, Jesus told him (Matt. 16:13-19). This confession was the rock that Jesus said would be the foundational truth upon which His called-out people would be assembled together. Because Peter was the first to make this confession, Jesus honored him with the privilege of opening the door of the kingdom of God to the Jews, the Samaritans, and to the Gentiles (Acts 2:14-41; 8:14-17; 10:1-48). Peter was a great example of our humanity. He was impulsive, at times. Misguided. He had an over inflated view of himself and his capacities, ...but Jesus knew. Jesus knew his weaknesses, and also his potential. Jesus loved him, and prayed for him to strengthen his fellow-disciples, after Jesus' death, because Jesus knew he was definitely the leader (Lk. 22:31-32). He was a man fraught with weakness and imperfection, but a man whose faith and dedication to Jesus carried him through, above and beyond those failings to become one of the greatest of the apostles. He was like we all are. Imperfect people are all that God has to work with, right? But He delights to take weak, faulty people and transform them into world changers. That's what He did with Peter, ...and that's what He will do with you and me.

Peter writes this letter when he is an old man. He had stayed in Jerusalem, during the early days of the church, then began to make trips in the regional area. Eventually, he traveled farther abroad, and ended his career in Rome. This letter was written to churches located in the area of modern-day Turkey. The apostles Paul and Barnabas had first ministered in Galatia (Acts 13:14-14:28; cf. 16:6; 18:23). Later, on his second missionary journey, Paul had tried to minister in Asia and Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit him to do so at that time (Acts 16:6-7). In Corinth, Paul met Aquila who had originally come from Pontus (Acts 18:2), so it was not surprising that he and his wife, Priscilla, accompanied Paul to Ephesus at the end of his second missionary journey, and helped establish the church there (Acts 18:18-21). On his third missionary journey, when Paul had ministered for two years in Ephesus, the capital city of Asia, everybody was exposed to the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10). Later on, Timothy and the apostle John would also settle in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). From 1 Peter, it would appear that Peter also had traveled through this area. All of this missionary activity should not be surprising, because this area is on the land route from Palestine to Rome. It could be that Peter's connection went all the way back to Pentecost, since there were Jews there from “Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia (the churches of Galatia)” (Acts 2:9,10). Those who had been converted at Pentecost, and had stayed for a time in Jerusalem may have had opportunity to get to know Peter in those earliest days of the church.

We don't really know what the occasion was that prompted Peter's letter. It would seem that there was some persecution beginning to crop up, and he was writing to encourage the believers to stand strong in their faith in the face of growing pressure. Peter identified himself as an “apostle” of Jesus Christ. The word, “apostle” simply means a “sent one”. It refers to more of a delegate, representative or ambassador, ...someone sent in the place of the one who sent him to speak and act on his behalf. It is a stronger word that simply a “messenger” (Gk., *angelos*). So, Peter is writing to these people as an appointed representative for Jesus.

It is interesting to see how Peter describes these believers. They are “select, choice, or picked sojourners”. The word translated as “select or choice”, or in some versions “chosen” is an adjective. It is not a verbal form, it is an adjective that modifies the noun. The word generally refers to a quality of persons or things. They are “chosen, select, outstanding, of superior quality, excellent, choice in the sense of top of the line, the best in its class”, *or* it could be a reference to these people having previously been “picked out” or “selected”. The important thing is to recognize that this word is *not a verb*. The verse does *not* say that they are ones “who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God” as many translations render it. They are “select, top-of-the-line sojourners of the dispersion”.

The word translated as “sojourners, aliens, temporary residents, exiles, pilgrims” in the different versions is the Greek word meaning “one from a foreign country who comes to live alongside the natives”. We are temporary residents, who are located here only for a time. The word is even used for a “refugee”. Did you ever think of your self as a “refugee from heaven, living here for a brief time”? We are people who living here for a period of time, even though this is *not* our native land or our normal home. We are foreigners, ...citizens of another country..., who are only dwelling here for a while. The thrust of the word is not just that we are foreigners or strangers, but that we come

alongside of the people here. We are *alongside* and *upon* them. We are not to be in separate enclaves or ghettos, gated communities or “compounds” of Christians. We are to be mixed up alongside of and upon the lives of those who are “earthers”, ...those who are not yet citizens of heaven, like we are. We are strangers in this land we no longer belong to, ...but we are also here to influence those among whom we live.

There is another word in this phrase that adds yet another dimension. We are the “select, top-of-the-line sojourners of *dispersion*”. The word, *diaspora*, was a very familiar word, ...to the Jews especially. It referred to the scattering of their people among the nations, ...as had happened in the exile at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Even though God made the way for the Jews to come back to their homeland, most of them did not. They were scattered abroad throughout many countries, even as they are today. There are still many more Jews outside of Israel than there are within their ancestral land. At Pentecost, we saw an extensive list of the many countries represented by pilgrims to Jerusalem (Acts 2:9-11). Peter is using this very familiar term to communicate what God was doing with the church. God was scattering His people, the disciples of Jesus, throughout the countries around the world, ...but specifically here among the countries where the recipients of his letter are temporarily living.

Now we come to the phrase “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”. He is the One who has dispersed His select people, scattering them purposefully throughout the territories He desires them to influence. He has placed them *alongside of* and *upon* the lives of those who do not yet know Jesus. God knows what He is doing. This is His intentional plan, to place *you* where He has. In John 15:16, Jesus said something very similar. He said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you (lit., ‘placed you’) in order that you might bear fruit.” We can be confident that we are in the place God desires for us to be, ...unless He specifically calls us to go elsewhere. We have been scattered, ...sprinkled across our neighborhoods and networks of relationships..., so that we could live as *unusual people*, ...people of a different culture, a different country, a different way of living..., right up close and personal, *alongside of* and *upon* them, so they would see an otherworldly radiance from our lives.

We do this in “sanctification of the Spirit”. Sanctification means “dedication, consecration, devotion”. It means intentionally setting our minds and wills to separate ourselves from the cultural noise and norms in order to focus on and tune in to the Spirit. Paul said, “If we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit” and “Those who are led by the Spirit, these are the children of God” (Gal. 5:25; Rom. 8:14). Those who are choosing to embrace the dedication of the Spirit will choose to set their minds, ...their focused attention..., on the Spirit, the things of the Spirit, and the leading of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-14; Col. 3:1,2; Gal. 5:16-25). Set-apart-ness of the Spirit is intentionally devoting oneself to learn to tune in to and walk in the Spirit.

Where does this focus on the Spirit lead? “Unto obedience”. There are two basic words in NT Greek for obedience. There is obedience that we give because we are persuaded and convinced. We understand the thing asked of us, and it makes sense to us. The kind of obedience described here, however, is “hearing-under obedience”. It is responding to the whispers and leadings of God *even when we don't understand and it doesn't necessarily make sense*. We *don't see the outcome*, but we hear the prompting. Jesus had to learn this kind of obedience through the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8). It is learned experientially and relationally. It means we have to *tune in*, and then *act on* what we discern to be God's prompting, ...even if it costs us something, or we have to die to ourselves in some way. As we learn to walk with God in this way, we will see how He takes those voluntary choices to sacrifice something to respond to God and He will produce something very powerful and precious. Jesus learned in this same way.

This focus on the Spirit will also lead us to “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”. The Spirit will expose our sin, and will bring us to the cleansing blood of Jesus, over and over. Some people think of the cleansing blood of Jesus as only referring to a one-time act, ...but that is not what the scripture teaches. Jesus *shed* His blood *once for all*, but the *application* of that blood, the cleansing of that blood, the covering of that blood is available to us *over and over*, as we need it. This dedication to and focus on the ministry of the Spirit is described by John as, “if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have a common-sharing with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son *continually-cleanses us* from every sin” (1 Jn. 1:7). The Spirit will always bring us back to Jesus. He is the Savior.

Note that Father, Son and Spirit are all included in verse 2. It is through the grace and peace provided by God, purchased by the Son, and mediated to us by the Spirit that we can walk as select, top-of-the-line pilgrims in this present age. Our victory, our success, our effectiveness is only possible through multiplied grace, ...grace for every shortfall, and grace to empower us to live beyond the strictly human level. The peace which Christ has purchased has opened our relationship with God the Father through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Father leads us through the Spirit, and they reveal the reality of Jesus in our lives. As we live *alongside of* and *upon* the lives of our neighbors, co-workers, family and friends, it is God's purpose to cause the fragrance of Jesus' life to be detected from ours (2 Cor. 2:14-16), and the light of the Father's glory to be made visible by what we do and say (2 Cor. 3:17,18; Matt. 5:14-16). God has placed us right where He wants us, and He will use us where we are. We just need to be attentive and responsive to Him. We are His select arrow through which He will reveal His glory (Isa. 49:2,3).