



river west church

Being God's People on Mission

1 Peter Introduction

Pastor Guy Gray

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The Gospel Lived Out

The Book of First Peter is all about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This Gospel emphasis is two-fold: the Gospel “understood,” and the Gospel “lived out.” True Christian faith always includes both.

That's why First Peter is filled with deep and rich teaching on the heart of the Gospel: the miracle of new birth, the hope that comes through the resurrection of Christ and our ransom provided by the blood of Jesus Christ (all in chapter 1).

But it's not enough to know these things; we must be changed by them. We must learn to live our lives with these Gospel truths at the center. God gives us a new life, a new identity, and a new purpose through the Gospel. Peter wrote his letter to show us how to live this out in a world which does not put Christ first.

Being Different

Right off the bat, Peter sounds his theme. He calls his Christian readers “elect exiles of the dispersion (1:1).” Sounds a bit extreme! Later, he uses the words “sojourners and exiles (2:11).” What's the point? Being a Christian makes you different. Sure, you may shop in the same stores, wear the same clothes, and order the same skinny vanilla latte as everybody else in your neighborhood. But there is something radically different going on in your heart and mind – a different allegiance, a different identity. There are new choices, based on different values. All of this sets you apart. Not everyone is going to be thrilled with the new you. The reality is, it's impossible to live out the truth of the Gospel in this world without experiencing some real friction in your life. And this is why Peter calls them sojourners and exiles.

Nothing could be more relevant for us today. We live in a culture that is increasingly uncomfortable with those who are openly committed to expressing their Christian identity. So how are we to respond? How are we to live out our faith in Christ (Gospel faith) in our culture, in our time? That is exactly the theme of First Peter. The answers he gives are powerful.

Being God's People on Mission

In all that Peter teaches, there is one theme that captures the heart of the matter best. You'll find it in chapter 2 verse 9:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
(1Pe 2:9 ESV)

There are two parts to this verse.

First: being God's people. Peter piles up phrases from the Old Testament that define the unique identity of God's own people. It's awesome. This is God's aim through the Gospel – creating a new people, a new community of those who are born again through faith in Christ. This is a community of “sojourners and exiles”, men and women who are in this world, but who don't totally belong to this world.

Second: being on mission. This is what it means to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The proclamation is in both word and deed. It means speaking – giving a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). But it also means living in a very different way. It means enduring insults. It means suffering with a heart of faith. It means showing the Gospel by how we live in a broken world.

We may be sojourners, resident aliens, in our larger culture, but we are here for a reason. We are here as representatives of Christ, not only as individuals, but as a community of Christ. We are here on mission. It’s a high calling!

Our goal as we study 1 Peter is to find out what it means to be God’s people on mission in a broken world. As we do, we will see the glory of Jesus, grow in deeply rooted faith, learn to suffer with joy, serve one another in love, apply the Cross of Christ to our relationships, prevail in spiritual battle, and grow strong in the true grace of God in which we stand. So dig deep. Pray. Believe. And let’s be God’s people on mission in our broken world!