

A CONVERSATION IN 1 PETER

Grace for the Pilgrimage

We launched our first conversation in **1 Peter** by noting that each of the twenty-one inspired letters of the New Testament have a unique author — writing to a specific audience — addressing how the Gospel relates to the specific needs and circumstances of those readers.

THE AUTHOR — Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 1:1 CSB) ...and witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory about to be revealed: (1 Peter 5:1 CSB)

THE READERS — 1 Peter 1:1 To those chosen, living as exiles (NKJV pilgrims) dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

I'm going to build a little bit on what we learned last week about the identity of his readers.

The idea behind the word **exiles/pilgrims** is that of someone who lives as *a temporary resident in a foreign land*. The New Living Translation reads it as – “*to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in*”

Pilgrims are sojourners and travelers, and **pilgrims** live in constant awareness of their true home.

William Barclay quotes an early Christian writing (*The Epistle to Diognetus*) that gives the idea of what **pilgrims** are.

“They inhabit the lands of their birth, but as temporary residents of it; they take their share of all responsibilities as citizens, and endure all disabilities as

*aliens. Every foreign land is their native land, and every native land a foreign land ... they pass their days upon earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.”*¹

IF you're a Christian — THAT is what you are.

THE AUTHOR

THE READERS

THE REASON for writing

We find the words Suffer — Suffering — Sufferings — all over the letter.

The purpose of the letter is to **encourage** men and women living as pilgrims to stand fast while they endure suffering and distress in the present evil age.

We not only find the words *suffer — suffering and sufferings* all over this letter. We also find the word *GRACE*.

1 Peter 5:12 NLT My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that the grace of God is with you no matter what happens.”

What is this thing called grace?

Grace is not a New Testament thing. We can't think that that God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath while the God of the New Testament is the God of grace. Neither can we create an exclusive/rigid paradigm in which we say the Old Testament is about Law while the New Testament is about grace.

EVERYTHING about the redeeming plans and purposes of God has its origin and outworking in GRACE. God's response to the Fall in the garden? Grace! God's dealings with Abraham: GRACE. God's redeeming the Israelites from slavery and death in Egypt: GRACE. You might say, *Wait a minute! What about the 10 Commandments*. God didn't rescue the Israelites from bondage and death in

¹ Guzik, D. (2013). *1 Peter* (1 Pe 1:1). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

Egypt and lead them to Mt. Sinai to slap the 10 commandments on them like an ankle bracelet and tell them that breaking any of those commandments was like violating parole. Remember how God prefaced those 10 commandments? With the story of His redeeming, rescuing grace and love!

Exodus 20:1-2 (CSB) Then God spoke all these words: ²*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.*

The decalogue was **from** YHWH **for** man. God establishing His covenant with the Israelites in the wilderness: GRACE. *But what about all the laws tied to that covenant?* That was God defining the way the redeemed descendants of Abraham would live in His grace. The NT equivalent would be *“Keeping yourself in the love of God”* or *“Therefore, see that you walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”* God establishing the priesthood and the sacrificial system: GRACE! God establishing a kingly line in Israel through which the Messiah would come: GRACE! The exile of God’s people in Babylon and their return to the land — preserving the lineage of the coming Messiah: GRACE!

Throughout the Old Testament there is a very specific Hebrew word used to describe the heart and actions of God in redemption history: Chesed.

Chesed is *the attitude and activity of God toward humankind.*² It’s translated as steadfast love. It speaks of God’s ONE WAY (unidirectional — unilateral) unending, relentless **love in action** to do something about the essential need of fallen man to be reconciled to his creator — a need that man could never meet — a need for which there is **no alternative source** of assistance³

The outcome of ALL of that GRACE in the Old Testament was moving towards Jesus —

² Kselman, J. S. (1992). Grace: Old Testament. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 2, p. 1086). New York: Doubleday.

³ Kselman, J. S. (1992). Grace: Old Testament. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 2, p. 1086). New York: Doubleday.

John 1:14 (CSB) ¹⁴*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

With nothing on our end to merit it — the gracious God of the Old Testament stepped into our fallen world to exercise His limitless power — to intervene and overwhelm our hopelessly lost condition — overwhelm our great foes of sin and death.

THAT is grace! Grace is NOT merely a theological concept (the unmerited favor of God)! It is, as Dr. Abner Chou put it — *"God's omnipotent, overwhelming, unilateral intervention — in **all parts** of our salvation."*

"All parts of our salvation" includes everything God did in human history leading up to sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross — and ***all parts*** of our personal salvation history — even the hard parts!

Let's read some of Peter's words and press the reality of God's ONE WAY (unidirectional — unilateral) unfailing, omnipotent, relentless love into the word grace!

1 Peter 1:2**May GRACE** — *"God's omnipotent, overwhelming, unilateral intervention —and peace be multiplied to you.*

1 Peter 5:12 NLT My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that the *omnipotent, overwhelming, unilateral intervention of God* is **with you** no matter what happens."

FOR QUESTIONS

A question that we received from last week's conversation that has to do with the introduction to 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:1-2 (CSB) To those chosen, living as exiles (NKJV pilgrims) dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²**according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

QUESTION — There is the question of how to interpret the word that is translated as 'foreknowledge' (prognosis) in 1:2. Some people understand this as God seeing into the future and then, based on what He observed (i.e. this person chose me), makes his decisions (i.e. elects them). However, I believe that the proper understanding of this word is 'fore planned' (planned ahead of time),

Here's what the General Editor for the ESV Study Bible says —

'according to the foreknowledge' suggests 'according to God's fatherly care for you before the world was made'.⁴

He then says this — and it is super helpful.

*The AV, NIV, and NASB make the phrase (according to the foreknowledge of God) modify 'chosen' by giving 'chosen' a verbal sense. But in the Greek text 'chosen' is merely an adjective ('chosen sojourners'), and is nine words distant from this phrase. Since verse 1 contains no verb, it is most natural to let 'according to the foreknowledge of God the Father' **modify the whole situation of the readers described in the first verse**: they are 'chosen sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, etc., according to the foreknowledge of God the*

⁴ Grudem, W. A. (1988). *1 Peter: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 17, p. 54). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

*father'. This implies that **their status** as sojourners, **their privileges** as God's chosen people, **even their hostile environment** in Pontus, Galatia, etc., were all known by God before the world began, **all came about** in accordance with His foreknowledge.... His fatherly love for his own people. **Such foreknowledge is laden with comfort for Peter's readers.**⁵*

⁵ Grudem, W. A. (1988). *1 Peter: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 17, p. 54). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.