

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
January 17, 2016

## Chosen People

1 Peter 1:1-2

1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,  
1:2 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: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

We started the New Year with Hosea 6:3, “Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord.” Therefore, let us keep praying for all of the fellowship and gathering, such as Sunday schools, worship services, prayer meetings, and home Bible studies, will be used for “knowing God.” For knowing God more than now, you definitely need to learn the Bible; every verse is very essential for knowing Him, but I believe 1 Peter is quite along with our “verse of the Year.” So, I planned to learn this book of the Bible step by step.

The letters in this era has the sender at the beginning, then recipient, and greeting at last. We follow this order and learn today’s verse.

### **1. Sender**

The sender was Peter, and he named himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” In Ephesians 4:11, it says, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.” In early churches, apostles are the most important roles among those who Jesus Christ appointed. Likewise the ambassadors of a country have

enormous authorities, so the apostles did as the ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

However, Peter didn't name himself as the "apostle" to boast his authorities. He wanted to emphasize that he was the ambassador of Jesus Christ, not anyone else. His heart and mind were full of Jesus Christ, who appointed Peter as His apostle. Peter was dearly wishing to tell the people about Jesus, and also encourage their faith. In fact, there's nothing about Peter himself, or anything personal in this letter. Everything he wrote about was Jesus Christ and the faith in Him. While writing, Peter couldn't name only himself at the beginning as the sender and wanted to write the name of Jesus Christ, that's because he called himself "the apostle of Jesus Christ."

The word, "apostle," originally means "the one who was sent," or "messenger." In this perspective, every Christian is also the one who was sent to testify Jesus Christ, the messenger of Jesus Christ. Let me make myself clear, "the messengers" prioritize the one who sent them over themselves. They protect what mission their Lord gave to them, never go their own direction, and follow what they were actually called for. If you are the messenger of Jesus Christ, we shall talk about Jesus Christ more than yourself or anything else. The name "Christian" means "who belongs to Christ," and it already includes the name of Jesus Christ. So, it's true and natural Christians talk about Jesus Christ each other and rejoice in it. When they talk about Him in the Church and become full of joy, and were sent to family, school, work, or local places, we could be the Christians who ambassador Jesus Christ. Each one of us should be remember we are the messengers of Jesus Christ, and if, as Peter did, we prioritize Jesus

Christ over anything about you or anything else, how beautiful it is then?

## **2. Recipient**

Next, let's learn about the recipient. It says at verses 1-2. "To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 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. Recipients of this letter were at Pontus Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These places are comparatively deserted areas located at northern part of Turkey. The words "elect exiles of the dispersion" remind us Syrian refugees. Whole population of Syria is twenty-two million and more than four million people have escaped to foreign countries since Syria started civil war at 2011. More than two million and ten thousand people come over to Turkey which is more than half of refugees from Syria. People described in Peter's letter were also Turkish refugees like we see on the news.

But, "those who are elect exiles of the dispersion" in Peter's letter are slight different from today's refugees of Syria. They were chased out from their home town and had to live in a foreign country not because of war nor political reason, but faith. When persecution against Christians started in Roman Empire at the first century, the local officers accused Christians who were good citizens, and took their assets, and owned them. The officers were not interest in faith, but enriched themselves using persecution. Therefore Christians moved to new places and kept their faith. The reason why they picked

deserted places not big cities were that they were not likely accused.

“Exiles” or “refugees” are the people at most difficult position in the society. They must have ashamed to be called “exiles.” On the contrary, Peter described very proudly these letter recipients “exiles.” In the original, Peter called recipients “chosen people, temporary residents, dispersed people”. People think “exiles” as “abandoned”. But, Peter called these people “chosen”, and encouraged faith of “exiles” Christians.

God did not only choose the recipients of this letter. All Christians are also chosen by God. Then, how are they chosen? When I translate the second verse as close as the original wording, it reads as follows; “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and for sprinkling with his blood of Jesus Christ”.

We are chosen by the foreknowledge of God the Father. The word “foreknowledge” refers to “God’s plan”. We are not chosen by accident but according to God's plan. God guided our life so that we got to know the good news. A lot of people who obtained faith in the US say, “if I were in Japan, I would have not gone to church or studied Bible with Christians.” The fact that we came to the US and came to the Japanese church was all in accordance with His plan. Therefore, we can start our life in faith with assurance. He who led us to faith would not stop protecting our faith and guiding our life.

Next, we are chosen through “cleansing of Holy Spirit”. Chosen by God means placed closer to God. To come closer to God, we must be cleaned from all sins, but Holy Spirit would do that job. Holy Spirit works on the inner part of ourselves and makes us reborn and stand in

front of God as a completely new person without any wounds.

Furthermore, we are chosen by God to become obedient to Jesus Christ. This obedience means “faith” to Jesus Christ. In the Bible, obedience and faith have the same meaning and disobedience and impiety are used interchangeably. We believe in Jesus Christ and we are chosen to obey Jesus Christ. Therefore, no one can be assured of whether they are chosen by God or not until they have faith in Jesus Christ. However, when they believe in Jesus Christ, they get to know that they are indeed chosen by God.

“For sprinkling with his blood” means Christians are chosen to receive forgiveness of sins through the Cross of Jesus Christ and cleaning from our sins. When you say “I believe Jesus Christ” or “I am a Christian”, but if you don’t understand that you have sins that need to be forgiven and cleaned, and that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for your sins, then you need to examine your faith. Because the Cross of Jesus Christ is essential to the Bible and it serves as a foundation of our faith.

How many of us, Christians, realize that we are the chosen people? If we feel sure that God has chosen us, how much would our life be filled with assurance! If we understand why we are chosen, how meaningful life with purpose can we have! To know God is to know yourself. If we know who God is, then we know who we should be. As we learn more about God’s election, we will learn the meaning of “being chosen by God”.

### **3. Greeting**

The last is greeting. It says “May grace and peace be multiplied to

you.” Grace and peace, these are beautiful Christian greeting.

Grace is the love of God, which is provided to people who are not even qualified. Christians are “elected or chosen” but it does not mean we are superior than others. God’s election comes from the grace. You should not be proud of God’s election. If you understand the God’s election of you truly, You shall appreciate God saying, “God has chose even me”.

Peace is needed not only for our hearts but also the human relationship and social life. When our hearts are filled with God’s peace, it creates the peace with others. As a result, it brings the wealthy and prosperity to our society.

Then, this grace and peace will grow, increase, and be multiplied. As it says, “May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” However, the grace and peace will not be multiplied naturally. These come from God, so we shall be connected to God firmly. Also, the love of God is provided by the Holy Spirit; therefore, we shall not be against the Holy Spirit or shall not grieve Him (Ephesians 5:30). Moreover, if we tell others about Christ, the grace and peace will be given to them and those will be multiplied and distributed.

For the chosen people, in other words, people who are connected to Jesus Christ, the grace and peace will be with them and multiplied. We shall believe in this fact and keep walking also in this week as the chosen people.

### **(Prayer)**

Dear heavenly Father, we sometimes forget that we are the chosen by you. Please forgive us. Not to be proud of myself, but to fulfill the

purpose of your election of us, and to understand your election of us, please help us. In this way, please guide and help us to confirm more our mission and election. For Jesus sake, Amen.