

Text: 1 Peter 1:1-2

Title: "To Be a Pilgrim"

Time: 9/13/2026 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: During the years between 1661 and 1672, the Baptist John Bunyan wrote his famous *The Pilgrim's Progress* while incarcerated in Bedford, England for preaching the gospel without a license. The Apostle Peter certainly knew what that was like. Bunyan was a tinker by trade, so like Peter, not trained in the religious schools of the kingdom. Bunyan's lack of training meant that his unlicensed preaching was illegal, but not only did it not stop him from obeying God's call to preach in the name of Christ, but also it failed to keep him from writing one of the most read books in the history of the English language.

In 1684 after a second, shorter stint in prison, Bunyan published Part 2 of his book, which included a poem with the title, "To Be a Pilgrim":

"Who would true valor see?
Let him come thither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent.
His first avowed intent —
To be a pilgrim.

"Whoso set him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is.
No lion can him fright.
He'll with a giant fight,

But he will have a right
To be a pilgrim.

“Hobgoblin, nor foul fiend,
Can daunt his spirit.
He knows he at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away.
He’ll not fear what men say.
He’ll labor night and day
To be a pilgrim.

As we are beginning our study of the book of 1 Peter, we have come to the verses that tell us to whom Peter writes. Peter calls them *pilgrims* (KJV “strangers”; ESV “exiles”). The Greek word is made up of three parts: *para* – *along side of* + *epi* – *upon* + *demos* – *people*. Peter is writing to fellow believers who live along side of the home of other people. In other words, they live in a place that is not their home.

The word is used in Acts 2:10, where it describes some from Rome who were in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost. That was not their home. In Acts 17:21, when Paul visited Athens he found both hometown Athenians and visitors to Athens on Mars Hill. Luke uses this word for these visitors. In Hebrews 11:13, Luke uses the label *pilgrim* to describe the faithful saints of the Old Testament this way: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and *pilgrims* on the earth.” There our word *pilgrim* is a synonym of *foreigner*.

Notice that these saints of Hebrews 11 were pilgrims no matter where they were to be found on the earth. In other words, their home could not to be found anywhere on earth. Their home was heaven. It is in this way that the New Testa-

ment believers of Asia Minor, to whom Peter writes, were not at home in their earthly homes. They were pilgrims, whose home is heaven above. Jesus promised in John 14, "I go to prepare a place for you." That is the home of pilgrims. It is our home as believers too.

My dad has been struggling to recover from double pneumonia in the 85th year of his pilgrimage on this earth. This past week my sister sent our family a video of dad quoting the kind of verse we pilgrims often quote: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). This is what pilgrims know – they know this world is not their home; they know their home is eternal in the heavens.

Peter knew this about these persecuted fellow-believers of first-century Asia Minor, and he wanted them to know it too. As he addresses his letter to them, he lets them know not only that they are pilgrims, but also what it means to be the Lord's pilgrim. He explains that as pilgrims they are chosen, they are scattered, they are foreknown, they are being sanctified, they are being sprinkled, and that they can have all the grace and peace that they need from the Lord. The Triune God of the Bible has so blessed His pilgrims.

I. Pilgrims are chosen and foreknown by God the Father in Christ (vv. 1-2).

Illustration: When we say *we know*, we can mean one of two things. First, we can know something academically. In our day, artificial intelligence has been developed to know more knowledge than any single human being when it comes to this kind of knowing. We sometimes call this kind of knowledge "head knowledge" or "expertise."

But sometimes when we say *we know*, we mean more than that we have a head knowledge. Instead, we mean something that artificial intelligence can only pretend to do. To know this way is to have a person to person relationship that depends on the closeness of that relationship. If you say you know my daughter, it means something quite different than for my wife to say that she knows my daughter. You may know some facts about Kara that Maureen does not know, but because they spend so much time together, Maureen knows Kara better. In this case knowing depends on the closeness of the knower and the one known. This is the desire of the will to know someone.

When we read about God the Father's foreknowledge of others in the Bible, we are reading about this second kind of knowing. It is the knowing of a relationship, not merely the knowing of omniscience. It is the kind of knowing we find in passages like Psalm 1:6, "For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." In terms of His omniscient intelligence, the Lord knows equally well the way of the righteous and the way of the ungodly. This is how He knows that one will be blessed and that the other will perish. But in terms of personal relationship, the Lord knows the way of the righteous in a way that He refuses to know the way of the ungodly.

New Testament passages also speak of our need to be known by the Lord in this person-to-person way: Matt. 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of

mine.” 2 Tim. 2:19, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

The Father’s foreknowledge of His chosen pilgrims is this kind of personal knowledge of relationship, not merely an act of His omniscience. The difference between mere relational knowledge and foreknowledge is that foreknowledge is possessed by the One who knew first. We are chosen according to God’s foreknowledge because He knew and loved us while we were yet sinners, before we knew Him, and He did so in the person of Jesus Christ. We are chosen in Him according to this foreknowledge of God in Christ.

Peter’s epistle explains that Jesus, God’s Son, is One chosen and foreknown by God the Father. Our election in God’s foreknowledge depends entirely on Him – 1 Pet. 2:3-10. We are foreknown because we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the Foreknown One – 1 Pet. 1:18-21.

The Father chose and foreknew the Lord Jesus in the way preached by Peter at Pentecost: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, Him, being delivered by the terminate counsel [the choice] and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23).

God made the determined decision to deliver His only Son to save sinners, and He did so knowing beforehand the suffering that this delivery would mean for Him. He foreknew that Jesus would be taken, crucified, and slain by wicked hands. We as God’s pilgrims, who suffer through our earthly journey away from our heavenly home, do so as chosen

because Christ was chosen, and just as the Father's choice of Christ foreknew what He would have to go through, so also our election was according to the Father's foreknowledge of us. What Christ obtained He has given to us by grace.

II. Pilgrims are scattered throughout, but gathered together (v. 1).

Illustration: Roughly fifty years after Peter wrote this letter, the governor of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger, wrote a letter to the Roman Emperor Trajan asking what to do about the Christians in his province. He describes his current approach as giving a believer three opportunities to recant, worship the emperor's image, and curse Christ, or be thrown into prison. He notes that for a long time the pagan temples of his region had been empty of worshippers, and he was hopeful that his measures of persecution were revitalizing pagan worship in Bithynia once again.

Application: Bithynia is one of the Asia Minor provinces mentioned by Peter where believers were scattered. The word *scattered* is *diaspora* in Greek, and it means *to cast seed throughout*. The word is used with a definite article in John 7:35 and James 1:1, where it likely refers to all Jewish people living outside of Palestine in John and Jewish believers in James. Here there is no definite article, and these would have been largely Gentile churches, so this is the first very Jewish label that Peter uses in his letter for Gentile church members. He will use many others, for NT local churches, containing both Jews and Gentiles together, are the new people of God. Constituting this new work, the recipients of Peter's letter had become the gospel seed of local churches scattered throughout the entire region of Asia Minor.

We know that these believers scattered regionally were gathered locally from chapter 5, which contains instruction to the

pastors of these local churches. This is the God-designed antidote for the homelessness of God's pilgrims – we are to gather together with likeminded believers as a local church. Providing this home away from home is our ministry to one another this morning. We are not just pilgrims; we are fellow-pilgrims. We are not just individual sheep, but the flocks of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. Spiritually speaking, to come to church is to help provide a home for homeless pilgrims.

III. Pilgrims are sanctified by the Holy Spirit to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood (v. 2).

Illustration: When Moses finished reading the covenant commands of Sinai in Exodus 24, he sprinkled Israel with the blood of animals as they promised their obedience to the Lord. Israel was a chosen nation to bring truth to the world.

Application: Israel, of course, failed to obey, and so God has a new gospel program. Peter is telling these pilgrims of Asia Minor that now it is their turn to be God's people. Just like the Lord issued the commands of Sinai, we have in our New Testaments the commands of Pentecost. No longer needing the physical symbol, we are sprinkled spiritually with the blood of Jesus Christ. As we grow in grace to become more and more like Jesus Christ and better witnesses and disciple-makers of His, God's Spirit empowers us through God's Word to obey Jesus, and His blood cleanses us from our sin.

Our light is so much brighter than Israel's ever was. The sanctifying process worked by the Holy Spirit in our lives produces the blessings of holiness that come through obedience to God's now completed Word. In Rom. 6:19 this holiness is the opposite of lawlessness. In verse 22 it includes freedom from bondage to sin. In 1 Thess. 4:7 it is the opposite of uncleanness, where in verses 3-4 it describes a life of

sexual purity and honor. This holiness includes faith, love, and sobriety (1 Tim. 2:15), as well as ultimate peace (Heb. 12:14). God's pilgrims are becoming more and more obedient to Christ and cleansed for His gospel work.

Conclusion: These are those who first received this letter – pilgrims chosen, foreknown, scattered as seed, gathered as churches, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit unto obedience, and being sprinkled by Jesus's blood. Peter prayed for them – “Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”

This morning, we have received the same letter as the same kind of pilgrims. Living in a world infected with the evil of people like Pliny the Younger, Trajan, and the Anglican Church that imprisoned John Bunyan, we need not fear because we are blessed pilgrims in Christ. Peter's prayer for pilgrims is the Holy Spirit's prayer for us as well – grace and peace be multiplied for our journey. May we, like Peter and Bunyan, and many others who have gone before us, understand well the privilege and responsibility that is ours – to be a pilgrim like they were.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching