

The Question Of Our Identity - Who Are You?

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[0 : 00] Amen.

Amen. Church. My name is John McPherson. I've just completed my training to be a minister and was licensed actually this past Tuesday. And it's a real joy to be with you here on the island. This is only my second time, but it's a real privilege to be here with you. And whether you're here every week or you're visiting with us today, it's a joy to gather together as God's people to worship God. In our service this morning, we begin a short journey through the opening verses of 1 Peter, a letter written to Christians who were scattered and suffering and sometimes discouraged. And yet Peter lifts their eyes to something incredible, that because of God's mercy, they have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of

Jesus Christ from the dead. And that's our call to worship today from 1 Peter 1, verse 3. Before I read, the call to worship calls us away from the distractions of the weak and the distractions in our hearts and calls us to the true and living God. So hear these words from 1 Peter, chapter 1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, have begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We begin then not with ourselves but with God, blessing him for his mercy and praising him for the hope we've been given. Let's do that as we sing words from Psalm 100. That's the first version of Psalm 100. A psalm that calls all God's people to lift up their voices and rejoice in the Lord, our faithful shepherd and king. Let's sing together from Psalm 100.

Psalm 100. All peoples are known to dwell. Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

Him sent with birth His praise for Thou.

[3 : 38] Come ye before Him and rejoice. Know that the Lord is God in me.

When the Lord is He in a name. When He is for He does not speak.

And for His sheep He does not speak.

Who enter then His cage with grace?

Approach with joy His hearts unto. Praise Lord and bless His name always.

[5 : 00] For it is simply so to do. For while the Lord of God is good.

His mercy is forever shown. His good at all times per least.

And shall promise to age and joy. Let's turn to the Lord in prayer together.

Let's pray. Amen. Our gracious and ever faithful God. We come before you this morning as your people.

Gathered in the name of Jesus Christ. Our risen and reigning Lord. With the psalmist we come with gladness and singing. For you are our God.

[6 : 23] You made us and we are yours. You are good and your mercy endures forever. We bless you Father for your abundant mercy.

For as Peter says in your great mercy you have caused us to be born again into a living hope. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We praise you for that unshakable hope. A hope that lifts us above our circumstances. That anchors us in every storm.

And that assures us of our inheritance. That can never perish, spoil or fade. But as we come before your holy throne we also come humbly because we know who we are in ourselves.

And so we pray most holy and merciful God. Lord, we acknowledge and confess in your presence that we have a nature that is prone to do evil and slow to do good.

[7 : 24] You alone know how often we have sinned. Even in the last week. In wandering from your ways. In wasting your gifts. In forgetting your love.

Oh Lord, we are ashamed for every way in which we have displeased you. And we ask you to have mercy upon us. Teach us to hate our errors.

Cleanse us from our secret faults. And forgive our sins for the sake of your dear Son, our Saviour. And oh most holy and loving Father, please we pray, send your purifying grace into our hearts.

That from now on we may live in your light and walk in your ways. In obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

And so having confessed our sin, we cling now to the promise, oh Lord, that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[8 : 30] Because Jesus lives, we who trust in him are no longer condemned but are clothed in his righteousness. We rejoice this morning that through him we are accepted, adopted and assured of eternal life.

Father, as we continue in worship, would you help us? Please open our hearts to your word, shape our minds to your truth, warm our affections to love Jesus more deeply and strengthen our wills to follow him more faithfully.

Make this time together a foretaste of that eternal praise which will one day resound in your presence. And we ask all of this in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Well, there are some of you for whom I think you have just started the summer holidays, maybe on Fridays.

Today was the last day of school or nursery. I want to address you just for a few moments. And I want to show you something I brought with me. Obviously, I came across from the mainland and I brought this with me.

[9 : 47] I brought my suitcase. And I wonder why you might pack a suitcase. I know maybe you might think for it to go on holiday or to move house.

Or maybe to visit family on the other side of the island. A suitcase means someone's going on a journey. Maybe for fun, maybe for a long time.

Or like me, I packed it to get across from St. Andrews. And usually, when you're living out of a suitcase, it means one thing. It means you're not at home.

Now, imagine, right, if your family had to pack up everything you own and move far away.

Maybe even to a country where you didn't speak the language, where the food was different, and where people maybe looked at you funny for going to church or loving Jesus.

[10 : 46] That's how it was for the people Peter writes to in the Bible. Peter calls them, this very special word, he calls them exiles.

That's a word for people who are far from home. People who don't quite belong where they are. So, imagine this suitcase belongs to one of those Christians that Peter is talking to in the Bible.

They're living in a new place, trying to follow Jesus. And sometimes people are really unkind to them. It might even feel a little bit lonely.

They might wonder, does God still see me? Am I still part of his family? And what Peter tells them, and what he's going to tell us in the sermon, is yes.

God has chosen you. Of course he cares for you. Jesus has saved you. Your real home is in heaven. And it's safe. You might feel sometimes scattered around the world.

[11 : 54] Like you're living out of a suitcase. Maybe you're one of the only people in your school who's a Christian or who goes to church. But Peter says to those Christians, you're not forgotten.

You're not alone. And here's the best thing, and the thing I want you to remember. If you follow Jesus, this world might feel like a journey.

It might feel at points like you're living out of a suitcase. But you have got a forever home with God.

And he's with us every step of the way. That's what he said to the people he was writing to in the Bible. And that's what he says to us this morning.

So next time you see a suitcase, maybe you'll remember that. Why don't I pray for the children and young people of this church and of our community.

[12 : 51] Let us pray. Gracious Father, we thank you so much for the children and young people in our church family here and in this community. Thank you that you know each one by name.

That you care for them. And that through Jesus they are not forgotten or alone, but chosen and deeply loved. We pray that as they grow, they would come to know and trust in the Lord Jesus.

That even if life feels like a journey, like they're living out of a suitcase, they would be sure of their forever home with you. Help them to remember when school feels hard or when friends don't understand their faith, that they belong to your family.

And that you're with them every step of the way. Please bless their parents, their families, their carers, all in church who teach and encourage and model your love to them.

Give us all wisdom and grace to walk alongside our young people in love and truth. May they shine for Jesus even now in the places you've put them. In Jesus' name.

[14 : 04] Amen. We're going to sing once more before we open God's word together. We're going to sing a psalm that reminds us of something Peter wanted the believers he was writing to to never forget.

That even when we feel far from home, even when the path is hard or lonely, we aren't alone. The Lord is my shepherd. Not just in peaceful moments, but through every valley and every shadow.

So let's sing Psalm 23 together. The Lord's my shepherd, I love one.

He makes me down to line. In pasture stream, he leadeth me.

The quiet waters fly. My soul, he does rest on again.

[15 : 27] I need to walk the main within the path.

On righteousness, he does rest on again. On righteousness, he does rest on again. In power, his own mistake.

He does rest on again. Yea, though I walk in death's dark mill, Then will I fear the mill, For thou art with me and thy wrong, And thou hast be comfort still.

My table, thou art furnished. In present home, my host, my hand, thou dost.

With all the night, and my heart, the hope, the rose.

[17 : 14] Goodness and mercy of my life, Thou shrew thee follow me, And in God's hours forevermore, My dwelling place shall be.

Amen. Let's turn to God's word together. We're going to read now from the first letter of Peter.

1 Peter chapter 1. We're going to read verses 1 to 12 in the sermon. We're going to focus on only verses 1 to 9, But it's good to get a wider sweep of Peter's opening encouragement to the church.

So, 1 Peter chapter 1 and verses 1 to 12.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, Through sanctification of the Spirit, Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

[19 : 01] Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which according to his abundant mercy Have begotten us again unto a lively hope By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, And that fadeth not away, Reserved in heaven for you.

You who are kept by the power of God, Through faith unto salvation, Ready to be revealed in the last time, Wherein ye greatly rejoice, Though now for a season, if need be, Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, That the trial of your faith, Being much more precious than of gold, Gold that perisheth, Though it be tried with fire, Might be found unto praise and honour And glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, Whom having not seen, ye love, In whom though now ye see him not, Yet believing, Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable And full of glory, Receiving the end of your faith, Even the salvation of your souls, Of which salvation the prophets have inquired And searched diligently, Who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you,

Searching what or what manner of time The Spirit of Christ which was in them Did signify when it testified beforehand The sufferings of Christ And the glory that should follow, Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, But unto us they did minister the things, Which are now reported unto you by them, That have preached the gospel unto you With the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, Which things the angels desire to look into.

Amen. Amen. This is God's word to us. I must say, I was born in Peru, The missionary of Free Church, The child of Free Church missionaries.

English isn't my first language And it's been an absolute joy, As well as a real challenge, To study from the King James Bible, But I'm really, really grateful for it, And for our reading this morning.

[21 : 39] Let's turn again to God in prayer. Let's turn again to God in prayer. Our gracious and loving Father in heaven, We come before you today with hearts full of praise and thanksgiving.

We thank you for the living hope into which you have brought us, A hope that is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Thank you for the new birth you have given us, For the imperishable inheritance kept in heaven for us, And for your mighty power that guards us through faith.

Truly, Lord, we rejoice, Even though we may be grieved by various trials, Because we know you are refining our faith and preparing us for glory.

Lord, we now bring to you our prayers for your church here in Calanish, Around our country and for your world. I thank you so much for this congregation, And your faithfulness to them through the years.

We give particular thanks for the faithful ministry of Callum MacDonald, For all the ways you have used him to shepherd and teach and serve this flock over the years.

[23 : 02] We praise you for his care for the word, For his devotion to prayer and for his love for people. And as he steps back from regular ministry, We ask you to grant him joy and rest in this new season.

And may the fruit of his labours continue to bless this congregation for years to come. We pray for the ongoing vacancy here.

You know the needs of this church better than anyone. And so we ask that you would prepare and call the right man to pastor this flock. Prepare his heart even now.

And prepare this congregation to receive him with prayerfulness, with eagerness and with grace. And in this season of waiting, may they not grow weary, But continue to persevere in every good work, Keeping their eyes on Jesus, the Chief Shepherd.

We pray for all the areas of ministry and the church. We ask for your help in the desire to begin a crèche, That you would raise up willing and joyful volunteers to serve even the youngest in the church family and their parents.

[24 : 17] We commit to you the Thursday prayer meetings. Make them the beating heart of the church's life. May they be rich in fellowship, honest in confession, bold in asking for your help, and full of encouragement from your word.

We also lift up the joint youth group with Carly. Thank you for the young people you've entrusted to this fellowship, to this community. We ask that you would shape their hearts and minds by your word.

Help them to follow Jesus in a world that pulls them in many directions. And bless the youth leaders with energy and wisdom and deep joy as they disciple them.

Lord, I pray for any in this congregation who are hurting or discouraged, lonely, grieving or burdened by all the many trials of life.

Lord, you know them by name. Some carry quiet sorrows, others walk with heavy hearts. Please speak peace to them.

[25 : 25] Remind them that you see them, that you care for them, that their trials are not wasted in your hands. May the truth of first Peter, of a living hope, a kept inheritance and a present protection be a soothing balm for their souls.

Please comfort them, strengthen them and uphold them by your spirit. Lord, we lift our eyes to your wider work. We thank you for the denomination that we belong to, the Free Church of Scotland, and its vision to see a healthy gospel church in every community in Scotland.

May that be more than words. May it become reality in our time. Equip ministers, raise up elders and deacons, call many ordinary members of congregations to live sacrificially and to be wholeheartedly devoted to you in service and faith.

We particularly commit to you the work of the Free Church Youth Camps, with the first camp having set off this weekend. Lord, please use these camps to root young hearts in Christ.

May the teaching be clear and Christ-exalting. May the friendships be meaningful and the memories joyful. Use these weeks to save some, to deepen the faith of others, and to raise up future leaders for the church.

[26 : 56] And Lord, as many of us have been praying in past weeks, we look beyond our borders and we bring to you the people of Iran, especially amid ongoing conflict and suffering.

We grieve that war continues to wound and destroy. We pray that you would thwart the plans of evil men, and that you would change the hearts of evil men.

Bring true peace, we pray, O Lord. We pray for believers in Iran and in other conflict zones, that you would give them courage and steadfastness.

And we ask that even in the darkest places, the gospel would not be silenced. Come, Lord Jesus. Bring an end to all evil. And now as we come to your word, help us.

Illumine our hearts by your spirit. Take these living words from Peter's pen. Word for elect exiles for pilgrims for your people.

[28 : 11] And write them on our hearts. Show us again who we are in Christ. Help us to rejoice with joy inexpressible. And cause your truth to bear fruit in our lives.

In Jesus' strong and saving name we pray. Amen. Before we come to hear from God's word, we are going to sing once again.

Can I invite you to turn with me to the words of Psalm 119. We're going to sing verses 9 to 16.

That's Psalm 119 verses 9 to 16. This part of the psalm asks for, or asks an important and honest question.

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? And it gives us a clear answer. By living according to God's word. That's what we want for all of us, young and old alike.

[29 : 14] To walk in a way that honors God. Guided by his word. Treasuring it in our hearts and delighting in what he says. So let's sing Psalm 119, 9 through 16 together.

I bought me shall I young mother. This way to purify.

In me according to thy word. There too attended me.

Unfaithedly, he had thy song with all my soul and heart.

O let me know from the right path. All I come must depart.

[30 : 36] Thy word I am. My heart thou live. Thou die, O man, know thee.

O Lord, thou blessed, the blessed heart. Thy status teach thou me.

The judgment of thy mighty one.

My list in wicked house. For joy thy testimonies sway.

Than riches only gave. I will die wholly, he sends me my meditation.

[32 : 01] And carefully I'll have respect unto thy ways, each one.

Upon thy sats, whose mighty light shall constantly be set.

And by thy grace I never will thy holy work forget.

One of the joys of visiting different free churches is learning new Sam tunes. So I'm going to take that one with me. Thank you. Can I invite you again to turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 1.

It would be good to keep that open in front of us as we look through verses 1 to 9. And this morning we're thinking about one of life's biggest questions.

[33 : 23] The question of our identity. Who are you? I wonder how you'd answer that question. In fact I look forward to chatting to you afterwards and throughout the day.

Who are you? Consciously or not our answer ends up shaping everything about us from our conversations and priorities to our values and our ambitions.

To how we use our time and money. Instinctively we define ourselves in lots of different ways. We think of ourselves in national or geographical terms.

I'm Scottish. I'm from Calanish. Or I'm from Peru. I live in St. Andrews. Or we think of ourselves in familial terms. I'm a son. A daughter.

A sister. A brother. A friend. And maybe it's what we do. Or our stage of life. I'm a fireman. A teacher. A crofter. At school. I'm retired.

[34 : 24] For some it's their belief system that is at the core of who they are. They're a Muslim. An atheist. Or an agnostic. Increasingly we're told that our sexuality should be at the centre of our answer.

So who are you? If you're a Christian, let me put it to you this way. How does the God who made you and loves you want you to answer that question?

How does he want you to think of yourself? Because if you want to honour him with your life. If you want to be useful to him in evangelism.

Then you'll need to know how he sees you. And I guarantee you that the more we dwell on our identity according to God. The less we will have room for fear in our mission as a church.

To know Jesus and make him known to the community round about us. The first readers of 1 Peter were in a very similar situation to us in Scotland today.

[35 : 28] As you read the letter you discover that followers of Jesus then were also living on the margins of society. They were insulted, excluded and pressured to join in with a sinful lifestyle.

Their great temptation was to just blend in with the people around them. To forget their Christian identity and to compromise their distinctively Christian behaviour.

In the hope that they might become more acceptable to the culture and people around them. And so Peter the Apostle, their friend, writes... He writes this right at the end of the letter to encourage them.

He says to them in 5 verse 12. I have written briefly to you exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

And so Peter is writing to assure them of who they are so that they will be strengthened to stand firm for Jesus and to win others for him while they wait for Jesus' return.

[36 : 39] Even though now in the present their experience might be really challenging. If I could summarise Peter's message in the letter. It is you are different as a Christian.

So be different even when it hurts. To make a difference while you wait for glory. Our goal this morning is to be reminded and rejoice in who we are.

Which is in fact our motivation for our mission. If you are able to join us this evening we will look at verses 13-21. Which is all about how we live as those who are different.

But let me say this again. Peter's message is you are different. So be different. To make a difference. This morning we are focusing on that first bit.

That you are different. And I've got three points. All taken from verses 1-9. Firstly, you are elect exiles.

[37 : 46] Secondly, praise God for your living hope. And thirdly, rejoice through trials. So firstly, you are elect exiles.

Peter opens this letter with two loaded words that describe every Christian. Elect and exiles. That pairing is really rich.

It captures the tension of the Christian life. We're both deeply loved and profoundly out of place. Peter begins, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to God's elect.

Exiles scattered throughout the provinces. This is a letter that was written to Christians scattered across what is now modern day Turkey. And right from the start he calls them God's elect.

Chosen by God. That's a stunning phrase. Especially for Christians who were facing social exclusion, misunderstanding and pressure.

[38 : 50] They may have felt insignificant. Rejected by the world. Like their views were on the margins of society. But Peter reminds them you are chosen by God himself.

Not by merit, not by accident, but by mercy. And if you are in Christ today, that's true of you too. You are known, loved and chosen.

We might have big questions about election. What it might mean to be chosen. About God's sovereignty to do as he pleases and choose whoever he wants to save.

It's good to ask our questions. I'd love to chat more about it after if you'd like. But Peter's aim here, as he opens his letter, isn't to answer all our questions about doctrine.

Rather, Peter wants to encourage his readers. To reassure Christians that are feeling pretty insecure in their identity about the incredible relationship they have with God.

[39 : 53] The big point is, however hard life is, however marginalized you are as a Christian, however much a minority we might be in our country, no matter how small the church might be compared to what it used to be, it's still true at the most fundamental level that your identity is that you are God's chosen people.

And this is meant to be deeply reassuring. There's no place for pride or complacency and saying, oh, we're chosen by God.

Israel did that in the Old Testament and it didn't go well for them. But we're meant to feel confident and secure in our identity. I don't know what your experience of sharing your faith with others is.

I'd love to hear that. I've certainly been excluded from things, made fun of. I've been looked at suspiciously in different employment settings. The temptation is to fade into the background.

Just join in and make life easier. Even deny our faith. And right up front, Peter wants to tell us, it doesn't matter how isolated you feel. It's still true that you belong to God.

[41 : 10] That he's chosen you as a special people. And isn't his opinion of you so precious. But Peter adds the other word, exiles, or sojourners, foreigners.

I think the King James had the strangers. And it means people living away from home. That was true of the believers then. They were physically scattered across the Roman Empire.

And just as God's people in the Old Testament in Israel became exiles in the Old Testament, so today the unavoidable consequence of being a Christian, of belonging to God, is that we too are exiles.

Not physically. We're not driven from our homes, although there are many Christians around the world for whom that's true. But spiritually, if you belong to Jesus, you can never truly be at home in a world that opposes him.

Can I suggest three ways that that's true? That being exiles? Place. The question is, where do we belong? Where is our true home? I grew up with a real identity crisis.

[42 : 20] All my Scottish friends don't think I'm Scottish enough. And all my Peruvian friends don't think I'm Peruvian enough. That doesn't compare to the exile that Peter is talking to.

If we're Christians, we're citizens of heaven, before we're citizens of any country. And so our truest home isn't a house on earth, but a place in heaven that Jesus went to prepare for us.

But the experience of exile is broader than that. It's about people, who are my real people, who is my true family. Am I most at home with those who reject Jesus and mock him, or those who love him?

Fundamentally, we are God's people and God's family. We will therefore never be completely at home in our earthly communities. So place, people, but also exiles in terms of values.

How will we live? What standards do we live by? Whose voice guides us in life? Christians will necessarily stand apart from the behaviour of the world.

[43 : 27] Our lifestyle will be distinctive and alienating. What does all of that mean in putting it all together? Well, again, it doesn't matter how kind or brilliant or beautiful you are.

We will never fully fit in in a world that doesn't know our God. We're exiles. And I find that richer understanding of exile really helpful.

Exile is an objective fact for Christians, which results in a daily experience of alienation from the world. In fact, the Lord Jesus himself said in John 15, If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own.

But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Jesus is saying exactly what Peter is.

As a Christian, you're an exile. Right at the start of the letter, Peter wants his readers and us to know, if we belong to Jesus, we cannot belong to the world.

[44 : 31] We're elect, and therefore we're exiles. And Peter says, don't be surprised by that. That's no mistake. Your exile is part of God's plan.

In fact, he roots it all in God's triune work. He says, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God through the sanctifying work of the Spirit unto obedience.

This is one of the most compact Trinitarian verses in the Bible. Notice the Father lovingly chose you before time. The Spirit is at work now sanctifying you, setting you apart.

And the Son, Jesus, has redeemed you by his blood and called you into obedience. So from beginning to end, your identity is God's doing. Father, Son, and Spirit involved in making you his.

This is your deepest identity as a Christian. You are not what the world says you are. You are who God says you are. You are his.

[45 : 36] And if that's true, that changes how we view our place in the world. It explains why we don't quite fit in and why we shouldn't try to. Yes, it can feel lonely at times.

Maybe you feel it in your family, in your workplace, in your community. You don't join in with certain conversations. You don't follow certain moral trends.

You disagree with decisions that have been made in Parliament recently. And you sense that quiet distance between you and others. Peter says, that's not failure.

That's faithfulness. You're not forgotten. You're chosen. You're not just odd. You're set apart. We're elect exiles.

That is who you are if you're a Christian. And though it's hard, it's the best news in the world. In fact, Peter goes on to explode in praise from verse 3 onwards.

[46 : 38] Why should we praise God? What is it about our identity as believers that excites Peter so much that he speaks this way? What is it that we hold out to this community round about us as the beauty of the Gospel?

Well, that's our second point. Praise God for your living hope. Peter begins in verse 3. Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This isn't a throwaway line. It's the heart response of someone who knows the depths of God's mercy. Peter's not offering cold doctrine here.

He's singing. Theology is fueling his doxology. And that should be true for us as well. When we grasp who we are in Christ, it shouldn't make us smug or passive.

It should make us praise. And what exactly are we praising God for? Well, three things Peter highlights in these verses. Three incredible truths about our present and future rooted in God's mercy.

- [47 : 46] He says we've been born again to a living hope. Let me just read again. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Peter is saying we were once spiritually dead, but God, in his mercy, gave us new birth. That's not something we did. It's something he did. He made us alive.

Gave us a new heart, a new identity, a new destiny. Peter is saying you need a brand new start. Imagine with me that you're cooking something.

I quite enjoy a bit of cooking. But imagine you misread the recipe. Instead of adding a quarter of a teaspoon of hot chili powder, you put 14 teaspoons of hot chili powder.

At that point, you've made such a mess of the dish that no amount of yogurt is going to fix the curry. You need to go all the way back to the beginning and start again.

- [48 : 54] When God made us, he designed us to love him perfectly and our neighbors perfectly also. But we've all made such a big mess that we can't put it right just by trying to be a bit better or saying a couple of prayers.

We need to go right back to the beginning. We need a new start with him. And Peter says, praise God because in his great mercy, he has given us new birth.

The new start we need. It's not a physical new birth, but a spiritual one. I wonder how many people on this island are yearning for a new start.

The peace and freedom of a clean slate. That's what we have as Christians. And what kind of new birth is it?

It's into a living hope. Not wishful thinking, not vague optimism, but a hope that is alive because Jesus is alive. It's a hope rooted in history and with eyes on the future.

- [50 : 03] The resurrection of Jesus means our future is not death or decay. It's resurrection life with him. Christian hope is a living hope. I love the language of the King James, a lively hope.

It's not empty or dead. It's alive. It's as alive as Jesus is today. But Peter also praises God for an inheritance that can't perish.

He says, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. And it's being kept in heaven for you. Peter sings praise because we've been given new birth to a living hope and to an inheritance that is undefiled and unfading and being kept in heaven for us.

I don't know if you have inherited a nice home or some nice jewelry that's been in the family for a long time. Maybe some of you have inherited some big shares in Apple or Amazon or the big companies.

We know that the passage of time corrodes metal and takes its toll on our bodies. But this inheritance is imperishable.

- [51 : 16] Again, we know that in different ways human evil can rob us of our family heirlooms or destroy the happiest relationships. But this inheritance is undefiled.

And it's unfading as well. It will never lose its shine or depreciate in value. It will hold its worth forever. Our inheritance as Christians is time proof and sin proof and death proof.

Ultimately, it isn't a thing. It's a person. Jesus himself, the imperishable one who is waiting for us in heaven. We don't yet experience our inheritance in all its fullness.

But we, excluded, alienated Christians, need to know that our time of exile will one day end. One day soon we will be with our Lord forever.

Nothing can change it. Nothing can take it away. Nothing can ruin it. So praise God for our inheritance. I just really love that extra description of our inheritance in verses 4 and 5.

[52 : 23] I wonder if you spotted talking about it being shielded and protected. Our inheritance is being kept and guarded. A double security.

The inheritance itself is being kept in heaven for us by God himself. And God himself is guarding us also. We're being kept for heaven just as heaven is being kept for us.

Talk about the ultimate security system. So I just want us to pause for a moment right now and take all of this in. It's quite a lot that Peter says about our identity.

And he's saying to us, Christian, praise God, not just because he saved you in the past, but because he is keeping you now.

And because he's got a future for you that is absolutely secure. That's why we can live as exiles without despair. Because our hope is alive. Our inheritance is secure.

[53 : 22] And our souls are being guarded until the day we see him. So Peter says to them and to us, remember who you are. Elect exiles.

And praise God for the unshakable hope you've been given. And now as we conclude, Peter gets even more real. He says, that doesn't mean life will be easy.

In fact, it may be really hard. But even in those trials you can rejoice. Why? Well, that's what comes next in verses 6 through 9. Our third and final point. Rejoice in your great salvation.

Peter has just lifted our eyes to the future, to our living hope, our secure inheritance, and God's protecting power. But now in verses 6 through 9, he turns from future certainty to present reality.

And he says something astonishing. He says, in all this you greatly rejoice. Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

[54 : 28] Peter is saying that Christian joy and real suffering can coexist. He says you can be full of sorrow and still full of praise.

Why? Because joy is not rooted in circumstances. It's rooted in Christ. Peter doesn't pretend that suffering isn't hard.

He calls it grief. It hurts. And he doesn't just mean persecution. He says all kinds of trials. That includes chronic pain and family breakdown and loneliness, financial stress, doubt, disappointment, illness, bereavement.

The ache of exile isn't just opposition from the world. It's the wear and tear of living in a broken world. If you've ever known anything similar, you'll know how it can eat away at you and discourage you and leave you isolated and questioning.

And sometimes, therefore, because it's hard, it can make us question whether living for Jesus is really worth it. Peter's goal is to give his readers a fresh perspective on their trials.

[55 : 47] Isn't that somewhat reassuring? Isn't that somewhat reassuring?

Even if we suffer for a lifetime against the backdrop of an imperishable eternity? Well, you'll see that the suffering is gone in the blink of an eye.

Peter says that that same suffering is refining our faith. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

That tested genuineness doesn't mean that suffering is an exam you pass or fail. When someone suffers for their faith and perseveres in it, that endurance is like a badge of authenticity that proves their faith is real.

And that genuine faith, lasting, enduring faith is more precious than any earthly treasure, Peter says. Whether you've been a Christian for five minutes or five decades, your simple, tested faith in Jesus Christ is far more precious than all the gold in the world, he says.

[57 : 16] And what comes about from faith, Peter says, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus.

When finally the Christian stands before Jesus, having finished the race set before us, Christ will share with us his glory and honor as he says to us, well done, good and faithful servant.

And so hence the response of verse 8. Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him. Christians don't merely respect Jesus.

We love him. Even though we suffer and even though we have not seen him in the flesh, more we rejoice in him with a joy that is inexpressible. I was really challenged as I was studying and writing.

What does inexpressible joy look like? Turns out it's quite hard to express the inexpressible. I guess we know something of it when we see it.

[58 : 24] The thrill of sporting victory. The smiles at a wedding. How can we not love the one who loved us to the point of death on a cross?

How can we not believe in the one who conquered death and reigns on high as Lord of all? Verse 9 again.

Peter says, You are already tasting the outcome of your faith, salvation.

Not just in the future, but right now. Forgiveness and peace with God. The presence of his spirit. These are present gifts. And they lead to joy.

A joy that's deep, glorious and sometimes inexpressible. Too big for words. You might not always feel that joy. I know I don't.

[59 : 25] But the more you dwell on these truths. That you are loved. Chosen. Secure. Protected. Being refined. And heading home.

The more joy will bubble up. Even through tears. Peter knows life is hard. But he says, Even now you can rejoice. Why? Because your salvation is real.

Your trials have purpose. And your saviour is absolutely worth it. And so returning to that question we began with. Who are you? Is this how you view yourself?

Is this how you think of what we are inviting our community and friends to explore? Do you see that the church has the best news in the world to offer?

Peter begins his letter not with commands but with celebration. He says, You are different, Christian believer. Elect and exile.

[60 : 30] Born again. Secure in Christ. Even in suffering you have a reason to rejoice because your life is anchored in the mercy of God. And that's where we'll end.

By remembering this. If you are in Christ, this is your identity. This is what God says is true of you. You are different.

Peter's message in these opening verses isn't, Kalanish Free Church, try harder. It's not, be better. It's this Christian, Kalanish Free Church, remember who you are.

He doesn't start with a to-do list. He starts with a truth list. You're elect exiles, chosen by God, made new by his spirit and part of his family. You have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus and a secure inheritance in heaven.

You can rejoice even in trials because your faith is real, your future is secure and your savior is precious. You are different.

[61 : 39] And Peter's purpose in reminding us of these things is not just to inform our minds but to strengthen our hearts. He wants to anchor your identity not in circumstances of real suffering or vacancy in a church.

He wants you to be anchored in Christ. Here in Lewis, even in communities with a rich Christian heritage, it's not always easy to stand out for Christ.

Some of you carry burdens quietly. Some of you feel isolated. Some of you worry about the next generation. Others wonder whether being a small church means our faith is failing.

But Peter says, look again. Your future is secure. Your identity is firm. You are part of something eternal. So keep going, even when it's hard, even when you feel like an exile.

Because your savior is alive and your inheritance is waiting. And your faith, yes, even your imperfect, weary faith is precious to God. You are different.

[62 : 47] Praise God for that. And let that truth fuel your joy for this week and our ongoing mission as a church. Let's pray as we close.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the astonishing truths of this passage.

That you have chosen us, given us new birth, secured our inheritance and are guarding us every step of the way. Help us, Lord, to see ourselves as you see us.

Not defined by our past or by our pain, but by your mercy. Not crushed by our trials, but refined through them. Not unsure of our place in the world, but secure in Christ.

I pray especially for this church of your people, for Kalanish Free Church. That this church family would be rooted in gospel identity. United in gospel hope.

[63 : 51] And marked by gospel joy. Strengthen those who feel tired. And encourage those who feel small. Give fresh joy to those in the midst of it.

And as we go into a new week, help us to live not in fear, but in faith. Trusting that you are at work in us and will bring us safely home. We pray all this in the strong name of Jesus.

Amen. As we respond to the riches of God's word, we sing the opening verses of Psalm 103.

A psalm that helps us to do exactly what Peter urges. To remember who we are because of who God is. Though we're exiles, we're not forgotten.

Though we suffer, we're deeply loved. And even now we have countless reasons to bless the Lord with all our soul. Because he forgives all our sins.

[64 : 51] And crowns us with steadfast love. That's what Psalm 103 says. We're going to sing verses 1 to 5 to God's praise. Let's sing. O thou my soul, bless your Lord.

God bless your Lord. What in me is. He steadeth his holy name.

To magnify and bless. Bless, O my soul, my Lord, thy God.

And all forgetful things. Of all this graciousness.

Yes, be us, be us, be us, be us. Yes, be us, be us, be us.

[66 : 20] Yes, be us, be us, be us. Yes, be us, be us, be us.

Who does receive my life, God's love, Who does receive my glory, God's love, Who will receive my life, God's love, God's love, God's love, Who will come but that's all good things,

God's love, God's love, God's love, God's love, God's love, God's love, God's grace, When you let your life be.

Amen. The final verse and our benediction. Though now for a little while we are grieved by various trials, we rejoice with a living hope in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he has given us new birth through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead to an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work.

[68 : 48] Amen. Amen.