

Defined by God

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[0:00] If you have your Bibles and you can remain standing, we're going to read 1 Peter 1, just the first couple of verses. It's good to be back in the Lord's house. Enjoy the services this morning. Hope that you did as well.

Brother Sean's always a blessing. Thank you for the opportunity to open the Word and open the Word once again. We kind of laid the groundwork a little bit last week. We're starting a brand new series here in the letter of 1 Peter.

And kind of the idea that we live in a world that may shake us and the journey may wear us down. There's no doubt trials that are going to test our life, but we have a living hope because Jesus Christ is alive.

And that's kind of the thought behind this book when you really study it out. And we're going to kind of look at that this evening, the first couple of verses here. And look at this idea that we're defined by God.

We live in a world that wants to label everything and define us how they want us to be defined. But they don't have that right. They don't have the authority. That is in Christ alone. And that's what we're going to see here this evening.

[0:56] So you found your place there in 1 Peter. We'll read the first two verses where the Bible says, We need to realize our life is defined by God.

Sometimes we put labels on ourself. Well, I'm this, and we're based on how we live and what we do. But if we know Christ as our Savior, we are His. And that's what Peter wants to start this entire letter to a group of people that are struggling, that are scattered because of persecution.

He just wanted to remind them who they are to God and who they are in relation to this world. And that's what we'll look at tonight. Let's go to the Lord and ask Him to bless our time together. Father, thank you for this time to sing once again to you, to lift our voices.

Thank you for the great crowd, the group that's gathered here this evening. But, Lord, we didn't gather just to have a good fellowship and to talk with one another. We gathered here tonight, Lord, to hear you speak to us.

And, Lord, we are asking that you would do that. And, Lord, we pray that we would respond, that we could take these truths, we could apply it to our life. Lord, I pray that if there is someone here that does not know you as their Savior, that today would be that day.

[2:17] And I pray you would be with me, Lord, give me the strength and the words you'd have me to say. It would be a blessing to your people. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Thank you so much for standing. You may be seated. When you think of life, though, it is kind of amazing how quickly we label things.

I mean, sometimes it happens one time and we label it and it's that way for the rest of your life. Some of you may have a nickname that none of us know, but you did something one time as a kid and that nickname stuck with you for all of eternity.

And it's going to be that way whether you have outgrown it or what. But I think when you think about it, everywhere you go has some sort of label. I know we have some garage sale thrift people here, right?

A few, yeah. You like to go there and you look around and as soon as you get there, you see little stickers on all the items. One dollar, five dollars, as is, damaged, whatever it may be.

And I'm sure you've been places and you're looking around and kind of rummaging through all the junk, so to speak, and you come across something and you think to yourself, this doesn't belong here. You know, it's a lot nicer than maybe the one dollar sticker they have on there or whatever it might be.

[3 : 23] I love those kind of shows, antique roadshow kind of things. Those people make me so mad. They're like, you know, this has been in my family for 400 years and it's just kind of set on the mantel.

Or, you know, I was at a Goodwill and I thought I'd just pick this up and I want to see what it's worth. I paid ten dollars for it. And they bring this expert on there and they start talking about it and saying all these things.

And they're like, if you go back to the Ming Dynasty in China and all of these things and the emperor commissioned it, and they're like, it's worth 1.5 million dollars. I never find that kind of stuff.

I paid ten dollars and they'd be like, it's worth ten cents. I'm like, yeah, that's my luck, you know. My ROI is not great on situations like that. But the thought I want us to kind of think with that kind of a silly illustration is the item didn't change when it became valuable.

It was just labeled wrong. It was always valuable. It was always of that ilk, so to speak. And we look at our world and we live in a world that is constantly trying to label us.

[4 : 24] Kind of label how you do things. We label people by what they wear, what they drive, what they earn on a paycheck, what they post on social media, what they've succeeded at and what they've failed at and maybe what they've been through.

I mean, the list could go on and on and on. And if we're not careful, we can start believing those labels are true in our own life. They said, well, that's just who I am and that's just kind of my lot in life and, you know, it is what it is.

Anybody ever say that? My wife loves when I say that. Because sometimes it is what it is. But that's not how God looks at us and that's not how he wants us to see. And the truth is, that's kind of where Peter begins this letter.

He's reminding these people that are struggling, that kind of feel forsaken, kind of pushed out of their home and life is just kind of upside down. And it just seems like everywhere they turn, nobody wants them.

They're labeling them as problems and the issues. And we kind of spoke last week, even Nero had kind of labeled Christians as the enemy of the Roman Empire. I mean, it's coming all the way from the top for these people.

[5 : 27] But Peter's saying, listen, the world doesn't label you. The world doesn't tell you who you are. They don't define your worth. No, that was determined on the cross of Calvary that Jesus showed us what a life is worth.

He showed us what a soul is worth. And he wanted them to get that truth in their mind. And I just want to remind us as we kind of walk through this letter of 1 Peter and just as we kind of started out tonight, especially, of who we are.

Because sometimes we go to the world. Not that we're looking for it, but we hear it all the time. You know, sometimes you hear it enough. You know it's not true, but you just kind of, well, I guess it's what it is.

You may hear it at work. You may hear it at home. I don't know what the situation is. But when we were getting that way and maybe you're discouraged and just life beats you down, here's where you need to run to see who you are.

The Word of God. And that's what Peter wanted them to know. And in the opening message, we kind of set the table in the sense that we're looking at this and Peter's writing to a group of people that needed hope for the journey.

[6 : 33] And we need the same hope. Yeah, we're not facing what they faced in the Roman persecution, but listen, our world's not excited that you're here on a Sunday night at church. Our world's not excited that you're trying to raise your family for Christ.

That you're trying to raise young people that love the Lord. And Peter said, listen, we need to understand that we have a living hope. We're going to really get into that next week. And that living hope is by the fact that Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead.

And we looked at what biblical hope is. It's a confident expectation. When we look at our life from heaven's point of view, from God's perspective, we know this, that we believe.

We actually just sing a song about it. I know who I have believed in. And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which he's committed. That's what biblical hope is. That song that Brother Sean sang this morning, our hope is this, that Jesus is coming back.

Jesus hasn't just left us. He hasn't forgotten that we're here. No, he has a job for us to do. We're to go ye into all the world and to preach the gospel and to let our light shine and to raise our families for him.

[7 : 39] And all of the things the world say, hey, you're weird for doing that. No, the Bible says that's exactly what I've called you to do. That's exactly how I've called you to live. And we identified last week why we need hope.

Because we're strangers in this world. Listen, if you're looking for the world, if you're looking for peace and joy and all of those things from the world system, you're not going to find it. Why?

Because you don't belong here. And suffering and persecution, while we're not seeking it out, the Bible's very clear that all that live godly shall suffer persecution. It's going to come.

Life's going to be hard. Just because we know Christ is our Savior, just because heaven's our home, doesn't mean that we're exempt from the trials of life. And we need to be reminded of that. And today, as we look at these first two verses, even in this brief little salutation that Peter has in this book, there's tremendous hope for the believers.

There's tremendous encouragement that we find here. See, Peter reminds these people, especially those that were feeling out of place and pressured and rejected, he wanted them to know this, whose they were.

[8 : 45] They belonged to God. They wanted him to know who they are and what they are. And when you understand those things, when you stop looking at it and listening to it from what everybody else is saying, and you listen to what God has to say about you, it's going to change your perspective.

It's going to change your outlook, and it's going to produce confidence and assurance and hope for the journey that's in front of you. Because here's the reality. The pressures of life can often blur our focus.

Because we can come here, and even on a Sunday night, man, I love those songs we sang, and since Jesus came in my heart, and I know whom I have believed in. But listen, maybe a Tuesday or a Thursday this week, life's going to be hard.

And you're going to think, does God really love me? It seems like everything's going the wrong way. No, that song, that truth is still true when life is difficult. But sometimes it's a little blurry.

And if you live for the Lord, if you try to raise your children for the Lord, if you talk a little different and your speech is a little different at work, you know, you might be labeled as strange, extreme.

[9 : 54] And it doesn't have to be with people you know. Sometimes it's the people you're closest to. Some of you may have family that think, man, why do you go to church all the time? You know, what's your deal? I mean, do you think you're better than us?

You may have heard that. And Peter's reminding them that's going to happen. And if it happens over and over and over again, that suffering and that rejection and that persecution and whatever form or fashion it may come, it can just wear you down.

And if you're not anchored in the truth of the word of God, that discouragement is going to creep in and it's going to take root in your life. And then we're going to kind of become just kind of paralyzed and not able to move forward for the cause of Christ.

And so Peter wrote this letter to refocus these people. That he understood where they were coming from. He knew what they were dealing with.

And he didn't say, hey, I'm going to relabel you. He said, I'm just going to remind you who you are. I'm not coming up with some new terms. I just want you to go back into that moment when Christ saved you.

[10 : 55] When Christ changed your life. Because when he did that, that was a one-time event that has implications for all of eternity. That you're still his and you're still saved and you're still secure.

And so to really understand that hope, Peter first reminds us who and what we are in relation to the unbelieving world. We see it here in verse number one.

See, sometimes we kind of just blow through these opening things saying, man, that's a bunch of names I don't know. A bunch of weird places I've never been. But Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Which would be modern day Turkey. So Peter addresses this letter to these strangers that are all over kind of the known world. And by the time of this writing, the persecution against Christians was increasing.

It had erupted in Rome, but now it's just making its way throughout the empire. We know that all roads lead to Rome, but all roads also led out of Rome. And when that persecution came and as the world's hostility of Christ grew, and especially as it's kind of being sanctioned by the government in this situation, Christians became increasingly out of place.

[12 : 15] That's why Peter called them strangers. You know, sometimes you don't want to be strange, do you? Some of you are. It's okay. I mean, you don't want to, you don't want to, I mean, that's not like you're going like, man, I'm going to be as strange as possible.

Like, man, you may be nailing it, but that's not what God has necessarily called us to be. We're going to see later in this book, he calls us to be a peculiar people. That doesn't mean, hey, if you're a Christian, you have to be super weird. Not what it means.

No, but we should be different. And they understood that. And Peter understood that idea that he was different. That Jesus Christ had changed him and that he was a stranger.

And sometimes we hear that, listen, this is not bad news. He's not downgrading it. No, actually it's great news. And I would just submit to you this evening that 2,000 years later, if you know Christ, you're still a stranger in this world.

We sing that old hymn, this world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. And anyone, anybody here that's ever traveled to another country knows what it feels like to be out of place.

[13:16] I mean, I like, I've had the opportunity a couple times to travel, been down to Mexico on missions trips, went on a missions trip to Argentina. And, you know, I learned the main things like, what do you need to ask to eat?

And where's the restroom? Because if you can do that in a foreign country, you're going to survive. But isn't it weird if you've ever been in a situation like that? That, you know, you already feel like you stick out like a sore thumb. You can't speak to anybody.

It's just, everything's out of place. It's a weird feeling. I guess it didn't help when I went to Argentina and I wore American flag pants. Like, wonder where that guy's from? America, that's where I'm from.

But it was like, you know, it was obvious that I was not from there. And the thought is this. Is the closer we get to Christ, the more that we live for him, we're going to feel more and more out of place in this world.

But sometimes, when we start feeling out of place in this world, we kind of pull back and say, well, I don't want to get too out of place. No, no, we must keep pressing toward that mark.

[14:15] That our goal and our aim is not to be a chameleon in this world. No, we're to take a stand for Christ. We're to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

That they see a life that is different from us. And that's the Christian experience in this world. And when you go to a foreign land, they have different customs and they have different values and they have different language.

The same is true in our life. Listen, when Christ saved you, you have different values now. You have a different way that you live your life. And it's going to be a lot different. And they may not be able to put a place on it and say, man, these people are weird.

But the more they watch your life, they begin to realize, but they have something I don't have. There seems to be a joy. There seems to be a zest for life. There seems to be a zeal for something.

And I love how one second century writer, he described this idea of strangers. He said this. Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind by country or speech or customs. They live in their own countries, but as aliens.

[15:14] Every foreign land is their home and every home is a foreign land. They spend their days on earth, but hold citizenship in heaven. Listen, I'm proud to be an American.

I'm really proud to be a Texan. I think every Texan is. And that's okay, you know. Thank the Lord we're not from Oklahoma. I love you, Brother John.

But Paul spoke of this in the book of Philippians as well. The church there at Philippi was a beautiful little church. And yet they were very strong in the fact that they were a Roman colony.

It was a great distinction in those days in history. That even though they were some 800 miles away from Rome, they acted like Rome. They dressed like Romans. They celebrated all the Roman customs. They used Roman money.

And they were very proud of the fact that they were a Roman colony. But Paul wrote to them multiple times. It's the only time in the New Testament that that word citizenship, that conversation, it means citizenship.

[16:17] And he tells them there at the end of chapter number 3, he said, listen, I just want to remind you. Your conversation, your citizenship is in heaven. So you should be living like that. That even though we're here on this earth and we're Americans and we're Texans and we're all these things.

No, the overwhelming thing in our life should be this. That we're citizens of heaven if we know Christ our Savior. And because of where we're going, it should affect how we live right here and right now.

And that's what Paul was telling them. And that's kind of what Peter is reminding them here. Because if you listen to the world talk, if you watch what excites this world, if you observe their standards and their priorities, what should come to your mind is this.

I don't belong here. Maybe you used to. But that was when you were dead in your trespasses and sin. But Jesus Christ showed up and it changed everything.

And you're not living for the here and now. And it's not just about what I want and what I think I need. No, it's about laying for ourselves up treasures in heaven. It's about living for Christ and bringing those that we love along with us.

[17:24] And sometimes it feels weird. And we have that innate desire just to belong. But as Christians, we don't belong. And that's okay.

In fact, I think that's the way that it should be. That it reminds us of the job God has called us to do. And if you ever fill out a step with this world, it doesn't mean something's wrong with you.

In fact, it might mean that God is growing you and growing you and growing you. It's like that song that as we see him, the lights of this world, they just fade away. And the things of earth grow strangely dim.

I mean, just go back in your mind. Before you knew Christ as your Savior, the things that you loved and excited you. And listen, I'm not talking about awful, wicked, sinful things.

But just the priorities and the time that you spent on maybe things that didn't really matter. And you can sit here and look at your life now. And it's not that they were horrible things.

[18:23] But God's kind of changed the direction of your life. And he's changed the purpose. And you're not here just living for yourself and, you know, your four little people with you. No, that you're living here.

And what Christ wants you to do, that's what you're going to do. And that's what Peter's reminding them. That we are different. That this world is not our home. That our citizenship is in heaven.

I love what William Barclay, he said this. He noted this word translated stranger. He said it this. A man who is in a strange land and whose thoughts are ever turned home.

I love that. Listen, there's days, and I know you have them too. I think, man, I can't wait to get to heaven. You know, when I was younger in school, that was usually on the test days.

I'm like, Lord, please come back right now. I know that's a silly thing as a kid. But as you get closer to the Lord, and as the Lord has grown me in my own walk, I long to see him.

[19:26] I long to be near him. I can't wait to see the scars that he took from me on the cross of Calvary. And I realize that this world is not all it's cracked up to be.

There's something much better coming. There's coming a day when there's going to be no more tears and no more pain and no more sorrow, no more grief. Because he's going to make all things new. Praise the Lord for that.

So if we're strangers in this world, the natural question is, what are we to God? If we're outcasts, if we're peculiar, if we're different to the world, what are we to God?

Look at verse number two. We are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit and unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now when we come to this first word in verse number two, sometimes you see this word in the Bible and it scares you. Maybe you don't know how to answer this question. And you see the word elect and you just run.

[20 : 35] Listen, I just want to, I want to encourage you tonight, don't run from this word. Don't run from this thought. Here's what it simply means. A simple definition of elect is chosen.

Now there are some of the persuasion of the Calvinist persuasion that God chose some people to go to heaven and he chose some people to go to hell. I cannot find that in the word of God. Every time you talk about election, we talk about the foreknowledge of God.

Because we understand this, that God is outside of time. He is in the past and the present and the future. He stands out at all of those things. And God knows everything. Did God know I was going to save? Absolutely.

But he did not force me to. He gave me the opportunity. We're going to see later in the book that Peter says that the gospel was preached and when the gospel was preached, people heard it and believed. But what it just reminds us is Paul is, I mean Peter is reminding them here when they are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, he wants them to see how great God's love is for them.

That if you know Christ as your Savior, it wasn't some accident. No, God loved you. There was a lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world and he came and he lived and he died on the cross of Calvary for your sin and my sin.

[21 : 48] And what it does not mean is that we are not better than others. Because some that are of that persuasion that God chose me and I'm elect and I really had no choice, they kind of have this pompous attitude.

I just say it like that. Listen, you know what we all are in this room? Sinners. And if you know Christ as your Savior, you're just a sinner saved by grace. We're just ordinary people.

But God loved us. See, here's the difference in your life and somebody that doesn't know Christ is you had the opportunity and somebody shared the gospel. And when you heard the good news of the glorious gospel, it changed your life.

But God is the one that had all the initiative. When you study scripture, I mean because when you really get a hold of this, Genesis and Revelation is one letter. Yes, there's a bunch of books in there, 66 books, but it's God's redemptive plan for mankind.

And when you kind of look at the Bible as this metanarrative, it's like a 30,000 foot view, you're going to see this, that God had a plan, that he's bringing the gospel. And that Jesus loves us so much that he came for you.

[22 : 58] For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever. There's a lot of words that these Calvinists, they just kind of run past.

I'm not super smart. Hey, man, we didn't say amen right there. But whosoever means whosoever. For whosoever believe in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Listen, we were lost. You didn't do anything to be found. He found you.

I know we say it, I found the Lord. And I understand what you mean, and there's nothing wrong with it. But in all reality, he came from heaven for you. We were down in the pit. We were down in the mire.

We were down in the clay. Psalm chapter 40 reminds us. And he reached way down. He reached all the way down, and he found you, and he found me, and he pulled us out, and he set our feet on a rock, and he established our goings, and he put a song in our heart, and a smile on our face, and we should tell somebody about it.

[24:01] Listen, you're not saved because you're an awesome person. You're saved because you're elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, that he chose you. That's his mission. We're going through the Gospel of Luke.

What's his mission? To seek and to save that which was lost. Warren Wearsby said it like this. The election was not based on anything we had done, nor was it based on anything God saw we would be or do.

God's election was based wholly on his great grace and love. We cannot explain it, but we can rejoice in it. I'm thankful for it.

I'm thankful. I don't know why God loves me, but I know this. He does. How do I know? Look at the cross. Look at the cross.

Look what he did for you. Look at how he died for you, and you might be rejected by this world, and Peter's writing to these strangers that are scattered, and they're literally running for their life at some points.

[25:08] But he's reminding them of this. Why worry about being rejected by the world when you've been chosen by the Father? That's the thought.

Because when you realize, hey, that's my dad. That's my God. That's the one that loves me. It makes all the things that we kind of face pale in comparison. That's why Paul could say, hey, this light affliction that I'm going through, these difficult things, it's not really that big a deal because God's got me.

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded. That's what he's reminding us of this truth. Listen, when you feel unwanted, when you feel overlooked, when you feel out of place, just remember you don't fit here because you belong there.

That's where your home is. That's where your life is. Our life is hid in Christ, and we're going to see that here in just a second. And you're going to be there because God himself said so.

I'm so thankful God just isn't aware of me. You know what I mean. Somebody would say, hey, you know so-and-so? I know of them. I'm aware of them.

[26:19] You know, you may have people at your work, you're aware of them, but you don't really know them. I mean, you kind of see them, you're a little familiar with them. That's not how God sees you.

He tells us in Jeremiah, I know the thoughts I think towards you. Thoughts of good and not evil, thoughts of peace to give you an expected end. And you know who he was writing that to, by the way? People in the midst of Babylonian exile.

He's reminding you, it doesn't matter where you find yourself in life, God knows. It has the idea of a parent, when we think of God knowing us, that when I go to a basketball game, I went to Elijah's basketball game, you understand, I'm watching everybody on the court and I'm cheering for everybody.

But when my son does something, I'm like, yeah, that's my son. Pulled up, hit a pull-up three and a breakaway. I was like, not sure if that's a high-quality shot, but it went in and we were pumped up about it.

I mean, you know what I'm talking about? That's my son, shoots just like his dad. Why? Because my thoughts are towards him. Listen, that's how God looks at you if you know him as your Savior.

[27:25] He's not just aware of what's going on in your life. No, his thoughts are towards you. He cares deeply about you. He's chosen you. He's given everything for you.

And I love it, the old songwriter said, he knew me and yet he loved me. Wow, that just, it just doesn't make sense. But I'm thankful for it.

So Peter reminds them, to God, you're chosen. But he also says, secondly, through sanctification of the Spirit.

See, what Peter does now is he moves to the work of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is one of those fancy Bible words that just means this, to be set apart. To be different.

To set apart for a purpose or a plan. And when you study the idea of sanctification, there's three types of sanctification you'll find in the New Testament. Number one, you'll see sanctification when it's speaking of our position in Christ when salvation happens.

[28 : 24] And Paul talks a lot about this. When you read Paul's writings, he'll say things like this. In Christ. In Christ. Over and over and over again. What Paul is saying is that when you are saved, when you know Jesus as your Savior, you are placed positionally in Christ.

That when God looks at you, here's what he sees. Jesus. He sees his righteousness. We're robed in his righteousness. We're washed in his blood. Other times in the New Testament, when we see it, we study it out, we see that sanctification is showing our progress as we move along in our Christian life.

As we grow in Christ-likeness. It's the only time you should be progressive in your sanctification. Okay, just making sure. Because the idea is this.

Jesus didn't save you for you just to sit still and not grow in Christ and just hold on until he comes. No, here's what he called us to do. To be more and more like him every day.

That we would be conformed to the image of his dear son is what Paul told us in Romans chapter 8 verse 29. And lastly, we won't experience it on this side, but there is glorification. As the song was sung this morning, Brother Sean, when we see him, we shall be like him.

[29 : 36] And I'm looking forward to that day. I'm looking forward to the day when I don't have to battle this flesh and to battle sin and to have all the difficulties and trials of life. No, because God will take care of that. But here in our specific verse, when it says, through sanctification of the Spirit, it is talking about positional sanctification.

That when you accepted the gospel, when you heard the gospel preached, and you realized that you were a sinner, and it was your sin that put Jesus Christ on the cross, and you cried out to God for salvation, the Holy Spirit, here's what it did.

It set you apart unto God. Because we were dead in our trespasses and sin, and we were living like the world, and talking like the world, and walking like the world. But here's what the Holy Spirit did.

He picked us up, and he set us apart. And he changed our life. And the idea and the thought behind this is your salvation was not an accident. You're not saved.

It's not a get out of hell free card, but keep living like you want to live. No, you're set apart for something better, for something greater. You're not an afterthought.

[30 : 40] You belong to God. Because you remember on the playground when you were little, and somebody would say something, and you didn't have any other comeback, and you'd say, well, my dad can beat your dad up.

You know what I mean? Like, you know, when you were little, your dad could do anything. My dad's faster than your dad. My dad's this. I mean, here's the thought. Our dad is our Heavenly Father. And we've been set apart unto him, and he did a work in you.

He saved you and set you apart so he could do a work through you. You look throughout all of Scripture, you see every man and woman that God did something through, first he did it in.

God worked in Joseph's life, in Moses' life, in David's life, and then he worked through them. But the Holy Spirit is the one that sets us apart. Well, how does that happen?

Listen, who you are today, it's all because of Jesus.

[31:47] Paul said it like this in 1 Corinthians 15. It's by the grace of God, I am what I am. Listen, I know I'm not what I should be, but thank God I'm not what I used to be.

I'm thankful that God is still doing a work in my life. I'm thankful that he's set me apart, and it's because of nothing that I've done. Not of works of righteousness, which we have done, but by the precious blood of Jesus we're changed.

It's by the cross of Calvary that the work was finished. Listen, you're not trying to work your way to heaven. You can't. Jesus said it on the cross, it is finished.

And because of that, we've been set apart. We've been called and chosen and sanctified. And when Peter was writing this, he was writing to a group of people that would have understood this, and most likely he would have had some vivid pictures in their mind.

Maybe a leopard that was cleansed by the blood. You look at Leviticus chapter 14, and a priest would be set apart for service. And we see Israel in Exodus 24 entering this covenant with God.

[32:49] But all three of those stories, all three of those truths, they point to this beautiful idea that the blood of Christ is the one thing that cleanses us.

It's the thing that sets us apart, and it's the thing that calls us to obedience. Listen, the love of Christ, here's what it does. It constrains us. It commands us.

It allows us to live for him. When we start to step back and realize all the things God has done for us, Peter's reminding us, how can we not live for him?

Even in a difficult time. Even in a hard place to live. Even in a difficult work situation, or a health battle, or whatever you might be facing. Listen, Peter's not downgrading, but he's just reminding us, listen, we've got a lot to look forward to.

Why? Because we have a living hope. And really what you see here in verse number two is we see the work of the Trinity. We're elected by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, cleansed by the Son.

[33:54] We can say it this way. This Father initiates, the Spirit applies, and the Son accomplished it on the cross of Calvary. That's a beautiful reminder.

And however you want to say it, however you want to kind of look at it in that framework, what Peter's reminding them is they're living in a world that's fragile, that's falling apart in front of their very eyes.

And it feels like every time they get comfortable, they're on the run again. And every time this job comes up, well, they find out they're a Christian, and they get kicked out of the synagogue. And then all these things are happening. And life is so fragile and it's falling apart.

But your salvation, it's not fragile. It is rooted in the work of God, the Father and the Son and the Spirit. That we are sealed until the day of redemption.

Reminds me of the song we sang this morning. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That we're not just some afterthought.

[34:53] That we're not some number at the DMV or the post office to God. No, that we are precious in His sight. And He loves us. And He has a plan. And He knows where you're at. That's what Peter's saying.

Listen, God knows where you're at. Why would a God go through all of that and forget where you are? And forget that persecution and that difficulty and that trial you're going through.

He's saying, He didn't. He knows. And with that foundation in place, He kind of closes this greeting with a really kind of powerful thought. A little prayer, so to speak.

He tells them this. Grace unto you and peace be multiplied. And we know this.

We've stated this fact because it's important to the letter. That's not what they were experiencing in this world. He knew the persecution was there. And it would continue to come.

[35 : 49] He was there when Jesus told him and the other disciples, In this world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. And He was there when Jesus Christ stepped in and He said, Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give unto you, Jesus said. Not as the world gives. Give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid.

Because Peter understood that these people here, they're going to be looking for peace everywhere. They need some grace in their life. You know where grace was not going to come from?

The Roman government. You study history. Rome wasn't known for grace. They were kind of known for the exact opposite. Brutality. They're going to find it in their world.

They're not going to find it in their workplace. You know where they're going to find it? In Christ. In the life that He gives. In the comfort that He brings.

[36 : 49] Because grace is simply this. It's unmerited favor. It's very rare in our world. You know, I haven't been pulled over a lot in my life. But every time I get pulled over, I just pray, Lord, I need grace right now.

Sometimes it doesn't work if you're going a certain speed limit. But this peace that Peter prays, it's an inner calm and rest. It's a true wholeness.

That's definitely not in this world. Our world is in absolute turmoil. Always has been, really. I think we're just more privy to it now.

I mean, it's getting worse and worse. The Bible said it's going to get worse and worse as the day approaches. But listen, you have access to every horrible thing that happens in this world instantaneously. And it just, it almost brings turmoil in our life and our heart.

And it kind of just stirs that anxiety within. But I want us to remember who wrote this book. Peter. A man that has been through a lot.

[37 : 53] You know, we want to maybe relate to Paul sometimes and to Moses and David. I think we can probably all relate to Peter a little bit more. Anybody here ever say something you wish you wouldn't have said?

Peter was the poster child for open your mouth, insert your foot. I mean, he did some great things. But he also said, I don't know that guy. Never met him.

I don't know who you're, I don't know what you're talking about. See, Peter's had some ups and downs in his life. But you know what he's experienced in his own life? Grace and peace. Because he knew the one that it came from.

And he wanted these readers to understand that. He wanted these early Christians to realize, listen, yes, life's difficult. And Peter had been through it. I mean, they were trying to arrest Peter.

You read the book of Acts. And they cut James' head off. They say, well, that worked. Let's cut Peter's head off. I mean, he was a target. It wasn't like he wasn't writing from a place of understanding.

[38 : 53] But he understood that grace carried him through. That unmerited favor that God had placed on his life. You know why God had placed that on his life? Because he was elect through the foreknowledge of God.

He was sanctified by the Spirit. And he was cleansed by the blood of Christ. See, when this world feels hostile, it feels uncertain, Peter reminds us that grace and peace don't disappear.

When you're living for Christ, they're multiplied. And you can walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and you don't have to fear anything. Why? Because he's with you.

His rod and staff, they comfort you. But that only comes when you're in Christ. I know we know the song, but just listen to the words.

When you think about grace, amazing grace, how sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found.

[39 : 53] Was blind, but now I see. It was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.

But it doesn't have to stay there. It carries you through. Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come. Tis grace has brought me safe this far, and grace will lead me home.

There's a newer verse to it. I love this one too. The Lord has promised good to me. His word my hope secures. He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

That's the thought that Peter's writing here in this letter. Even in this little tiny salutation, there's a lot of theology, and we just kind of skim the surface of it.

So how do we have hope on this journey? Remember you're God's child. If you know him as your savior, you have a heavenly father that knows exactly what you're walking through.

[41 : 03] He knows exactly where you are. He knows exactly what you need, and it kind of ties into this morning. You think, well, is he listening? Keep praying. He is. Keep seeking him.

How do we have hope on this journey? Remember who you are. A saved, set apart child of God. And remember what you are. You're loved, you're chosen, and you're secure.

When you're placed in the Father's hand, no man can pluck you out. This world's going to try to rip you apart, tear you to shreds, but they can't touch you because God has you.

You're secure in him. And you might be a stranger in this world, but you're never a stranger to God. And that's our living hope, that he knows us.

And as we leave this place tonight, and we step back into a world that may not understand your convictions, that may not understand your priorities, that may not understand your faith, I just want to remind you, don't be discouraged if you feel out of place.

[42 : 10] Just be reminded that you belong to God. That you weren't created for the here. You were created for the there. That that's where we're heading one day.

That our citizenship, if we know Christ our Savior, should affect how you live your life tomorrow. Should affect how you live at school and amongst your friends. Should affect how we talk and what we say and where we go.

Because we are here to represent our Savior. This week, I think every week of our life, but in light of this passage, we need to live intentionally.

We need to live intentionally so someone maybe around us can see the hope. Because you know what that person that's wearing you out at work, that person that may be mean at school, you know what they're really looking for?

Hope. Hope. And they don't have it. But maybe they just need to see somebody that lives with a living hope. Let your words reflect grace.

[43 : 10] Let your response show peace. Let your decisions be shaped by who you are in Christ. Because it should.

If Jesus shaped you, He didn't just shape you so you could hang on. He shaped you so you change the way you live here and affect other people's lives. When life feels heavy, when discouragement whispers, because it does.

Maybe it already is right now. You came in tonight that way. Remember these great truths here of how much our Father loves us. We can carry that hope into our home, into our workplace, into our schools, into our relationships, into our conversations, that being in Christ, it should affect every single area of your life.

Maybe you're here and you feel like you don't belong anywhere. You've tried to find identity of being part of a church. You've tried to find peace in this and purpose in this and this and it seems like you're going one to the other.

Here's where you're going to find it in Christ alone. Maybe the step for you is just get it settled. Do I know Christ as my personal Savior? God loves you.

[44:19] How do you know He loves you? He's given you an opportunity tonight to hear the Gospel, to open the Word of God, to be reminded that Jesus Christ lived and died for you. Listen, you don't have to clean yourself up. You don't have to earn His favor.

You don't have to keep searching for meaning. The world is not here to define you. God is. And the cross says this, I love you. And I want you to be in my family.

If God's speaking to your heart about that, don't ignore that call. Allow Him to speak truth in your life. Come to Him. Trust Him. Begin the journey. If you forgot anything, if you forgot everything else I said today, I just want to remind us, as Peter was reminding these listeners, don't live by the labels of the world.

Live by the truth of what God says you are. Loved and chosen, you are His child. Praise the Lord for that. Would you stand with your heads bowed with your eyes closed?

Thank you.