

Living In Light of Our New Identity

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Mike. Thank you, Christ the King Church, for having me here today. Good morning to all of you. It's a privilege to be here again. I don't know if you remember, I was here a little over a year ago.

That time, neither Mike or my professor, Dr. Eric Turley, were here, which I don't know if he is today. But if I'm less careful with my words, that's why. Or if I'm more careful, I should say. Thank you also, Les, for leading us in our reflection for communion. Him, alongside with Brian Kankowski, have been longtime partners with Escali, with our ministry, through Missions of Feud. And they have been a blessing to our family, as has this church and many people here, such as Dave, who has been down to Brazil with us a few years ago.

And it's a privilege to think about and plan for our return. My wife, Carol, and I, originally from Brazil and returning soon. We couldn't be more excited for that.

[1 : 08] Now let's turn to our passage in 1 Peter. Peter's first letters towards the end of your Bible.

If you've reached Revelation, you've gone too far. If you're in Hebrews, you're almost there. 1 Peter 1, we'll begin reading in verse 13, all the way to the end of the chapter.

I'll read and you can follow along in your Bibles. 1 Peter 1, verse 13, verse 13.

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[3 : 13] 1 Peter 1, verse 14. 5 Peter 2, verse 15. 5 Peter 2, verse 15. is the good news that was preached to you. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that it endures forever.

May you speak faithfully through your servant. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear what you have to say and transform our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. The way you respond to a gift is very much dependent on the kind of gift that you receive and the kind of person you receive it from. If you receive a quarter from a random person in the street, that's very different from receiving citizenship in a safe country after you fled your country from war.

The first gift is not going to change anything about who you are and what you do. But the second gift will surely change a lot of things about you. From constant fear to a life at peace.

From unemployment to self-sufficiency. From malnourishment to probably having to watch out for your weight, especially if the country is in Brazil. So, in a much greater way, God's gifts to us are identity shaping.

[4 : 35] What God has done for us in Christ changes who we are. And in so doing, God calls us to live a new life in light of that identity. And this is what this passage is all about.

You see, Peter is writing to a group of believers who are scattered throughout Asia Minor. They're suffering distress for their faith. Because for some, they're seen as troublemakers because they don't worship the pagan gods like everyone else does.

For others, they're seen as social misfits because they don't take part in the parties that they take part in. Yet for others, they're seen as rebellious for having a higher allegiance to Christ than they do for the Caesar.

Yet, little does anybody suspect that these meek Christians are living completely different lives from everyone else in the Roman Empire because they belong to a different empire.

Another kingdom that God has set them apart to inherit. The first 12 verses of this letter were all about describing the living hope that Christians have beyond this life.

[5 : 43] Eternal life like we sang about today. And Peter concludes in verse 13 saying, Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We too live in similar circumstances to those that those Christians were experiencing. Christ followers everywhere are facing growing alienation from the rest of society. tighter restrictions on what we can say and where. And greater ridicule everywhere that we show our faces. Just like the first readers of this text, we too who have placed our faith in Christ are walking on earth as strangers and exiles.

Wherever we go, we're expecting a future kingdom in the coming of Jesus Christ. Which we don't see yet. In light of the uncertainty of their circumstances, Peter was calling them to set their hope in the certainty of what God had promised them.

And this is the call God is issuing to us today. But how does one live like that? How can we prepare our minds and set our hopes in the future while living in the present?

[7 : 04] The rest of this chapter is Peter's answer to that question. And in fact, here's the main point of the verses we just read. The main calling that God is issuing to us today.

Set your hope in Christ by living in light of your new identity. Set your hope in Christ by living out your new identity.

Here's the way I want us to break down today's teaching. We'll see that this text highlights three identity-shaping gifts we receive from God. They're the gifts of a father, a ransom, and a word.

I don't expect you to get all that right now. But receiving these three gifts make us change everything about who we are and how we live in this world as we wait for those future promises.

They give us a new identity to step into and live out while we wait for the coming kingdom. So as we cover each gift, we'll also seek to understand what sort of response or character God is calling us to have as we are shaped by that gift.

[8 : 17] Let's begin then by turning again to verse 14 where we'll reflect on the first identity-shaping gift we receive from God, which is a father that we can imitate and fear.

A father that we can imitate and fear. Verse 14 says, As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. I'm aware that when we speak of God as our father and us as his children, everyone will have a different concept of what a father is or what a father should be based on the kind of dads that we've had or that we wish we'd had.

But from the Bible, we learn many things that accurately describes the perfect kind of father that God is. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your father who is in secret.

And your father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heat up empty praises like the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard by their many words.

[9 : 33] Do not be like them, for your father knows what you need before you even ask him. Now that's what a perfect father looks like, right? The one who listens to us, who rewards us, who knows what we need before we even ask him.

And those are great things. And praise God the Father for being like this. There are some things, though, about having the gift of God as our father that we might overlook or underappreciate for many reasons.

In the same Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also said, You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. This means that for Jesus, being a child of God is not only about receiving good things from him, but also about becoming like him.

Part of the perfection of having God as a father involves calling his children up to be like him. That's why in verse 15, when Peter's describing how we ought to live as obedient children, he says, As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

So from the get-go, the gift of having God as a father and our new identity as his children is not something that can be received passively. Like, okay, he's my father.

[10 : 52] Cool. That will go against everything that God is trying to accomplish in us as our father. It would mess up his perfect fathering if we remain the same after becoming his children.

So this gift is supposed to make us become like its giver by imitating him like a child imitates her father. Look at how Peter's wording is intentional in his challenge to us.

Verse 14, Do not be conformed to your former passions. Instead, be holy as I am holy. That is, do not take on the shape of your desires, but take on the shape of God.

Desire the things that he desires. Reject the things that he rejects. Rejoice over the things that he rejoices. Conform your identity to his identity.

How challenging is this message to our modern years who want to talk about our identity as ultimately self-determined? Right?

[11 : 55] To begin with, Peter crushes the narrative that we are free to choose who we want to be. Unlike Disney would lead us to believe, we are not more free when we get to live however way we want to.

No, the Bible testifies that we are either conformed to our passions, slaves to our sins as Paul puts it, or we are becoming more like God. There is no in-between.

There is no other option. What seems like freedom is only more slavery in disguise because we can never act contrary to the desires of our heart even if it harms us.

That's where all addictions, toxic relationships, and frustrations ultimately come from. A misaligned heart. But with God as our Father, we get to be really free.

If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Free from the slavery of our desires. Free from the burden of trying to be authentic. Free from the consequences of a misaligned heart.

[13 : 02] If our identity is found in being adopted as God's children, we get the privilege of beginning to live like our Father, holy in all our conduct. He gives us the gift of a perfect Father to imitate.

But that's not all that should change in our lives once we receive this identity-shaping gift of being children of God. Peter goes on to say in verse 17, look with me, verse 17, and if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.

Now, I think it's fair to say that when we think of a perfect Father, being a judge is not one of the first things that comes to mind. But here, Peter is teaching us that another aspect of having this gift of God's perfect Fatherhood is remembering that He's the one who judges impartially.

In one sense, this is supposed to be really reassuring. I mean, if I knew that my father, Nelson, back home was the hometown judge, I would be laid back and relaxed because no one could mess with me.

Much more than that, we have a Father in Heaven who hears the cries of His children and delivers them by judging the wicked partially now and fully in the final judgment.

[14 : 28] Think about how encouraging this was for a community that experienced trials every day while living in a society that was hostile to them. I wonder how encouraging that is to you who have been wronged, who have been mistreated by your boss, by authorities from the government, by your teacher, by your parents.

But the thing with this judge, our Father, is that He judges impartially. Meaning that when it comes to judging, He actually does not see color. He actually does not see wealth.

or status. He sees everyone with equality. All His judging is according to each one's deeds. Now, how is the gift of having a Father who judges impartially supposed to shape how we live?

Well, Peter's answer is that we are to conduct our lives with fear. That's right, fear. The same Father who listens to us, rewards us, knows what we need and cares for us in innumerable ways is also the judge that not only our enemies must fear, but us too.

But what kind of fear is this? Is it a scary fear? What are we supposed to do? Is it a paralyzing fear? I think you know the answer to that.

[15 : 56] Think about this. In the same context of Leviticus 19 where we get the phrase you shall be holy for I am holy, it is also said in the next verse, every one of you shall fear his mother and father.

So as he applies Leviticus 19 to New Testament believers, Peter brings these two verses together and calls us to fear God the Father in a similar way that we would fear our earthly mother and father.

We don't fear him like unbelievers and rebellious people against him do, but we fear him as we do our earthly mother and father. Now I don't know what kind of relationship you have with your parents, either now or when you were a child, and a lot of abuse has taken place that can make us misunderstand what it means to properly fear our parents and consequently what it means to fear God.

But when godly authority is used in the home, it is not far to see how love and fear can go together. It is the godly fear of your father that leads you to wearing a helmet when you go skating. It is the fear of your mother that leads you to cleaning up your room. It is the fear of your parents that lead you to respect the elderly. We see then that both of the ways God calls us to live as his children with holiness and with fear are a function of his paternal love because he wants us to grow and because he wants to protect us.

[17 : 37] And the more we embrace this gift of being adopted by God, the more we live in light of our identity as his children, the more we become hopeful of that future kingdom where we and all his children will relate to him with perfect holiness and with appropriate fear.

Now let's turn to our next identity shaping gift which is a ransom that we can trust. A ransom that we can trust.

Look again at verse 18. It says, Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

I imagine you can tell that verse 18 is just a continuation of verse 17. Verse 17 taught us to live in fear of God and now verse 18 comes to say that we're to do so while knowing something.

And this something that Peter wants us to know will totally influence how we see this father that we must imitate in fear. Here's what we're supposed to know. We have been ransomed.

[18 : 53] Now the word ransom or redemption depending on your version that shows up in the text, it might not be much to you. But to ransom someone is to pay to rescue them from something.

You ransom someone from jail by paying their bail and you ransom someone from debt by paying what they owe. And in this case, we have been ransomed, verse 18 says, from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.

Which is just another way of saying that we were set free from our sins. What used to enslave us does not have that kind of power anymore.

You see, the Bible speaks of at least two different ways in which we're set free from our sins. Ransomed from them. In one sense, in one side, there's the liberation of the consequence of sin. And on the other side, there's the liberation from the practice of sin. And this is an important distinction. The ultimate consequence of sin is eternal death and separation from God.

[20 : 00] Even if we don't believe this, our conscience testifies to the reality of a final judgment. The practice of sin, on the other hand, is not living according to God's way.

One is the penalty, the other is a lifestyle. I wonder if you can tell which one Peter's talking about here. You will ransom from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.

He's talking about the practice of sinning, right? We have been set free from a way of living, a sinful way of living, and called to live in a new way.

But the more I meditate on this truth, the more I ask myself, where does the joy I have over my freedom from sin actually come from?

Am I simply glad that I don't have to go to hell anymore? Or am I happy because the ways of God are way better than the ways I used to live on?

[21 : 03] I believe there's space in the Christian life for both kinds of joy. But here, Peter's particularly concerned with the second. In fact, Peter's talking like my mom, who would always caution me about playing soccer outside after I've already taken a shower and got dressed to leave.

She'll say, boy, why are you going back to the dirt if you're already being cleaned up? Peter's calling us to remember that we have already been brought out from a futile way of living, cleaned out of the dirt.

So here's the question for us to whom that is true. What are the futile ways of our past that we're still going back to? What is the dirt that we insist on putting upon ourselves?

By God's grace and through His Spirit, I call you to identify what that is in your life and put it to death because that is what put Christ to death.

And we shouldn't dare to treat that casually for our Father judges and He judges impartially. But now, I get it that we're ransomed from our sins. But why is this the gift of a ransom that we can trust?

[22 : 16] Why am I labeling it this way? Well, as I said before, verse 18 is nothing but a continuation of the previous verses. On those verses, we learn that God is a holy and judging Father.

And now Peter is calling them to remember that the same God is also our Redeemer. Look at how he makes his argument. Verse 18, You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers with the blood of Christ.

Peter starts by remembering us that it is Christ's blood which is the means by which we were ransomed. It is by His blood. It is the costly price that acquired the gift of our redemption.

So there is an initial contrast. On one side, there is this Father that we must imitate and fear. On another side, there is Christ who paid to redeem us from our sins.

But before we can start pitting the two against each other, Father v. Son, as if they somehow had different intentions or different affections towards His people, Peter explains how Jesus has done what He did for us.

[23 : 25] Verse 20, Jesus, the Son of God, was foreknown before the foundation of the world. meaning the Son is eternally known by the Father.

Never created, always existing, but this Son was only made manifest by God at a particular point in history. 2,000 years ago, He was made manifest for the sake of you.

This is an important phrase I don't want us to miss out. When Jesus showed up in this world, His incarnation, His life, His ministry, His death in our place, His resurrection, were all done for the sake of you, God's children.

Jesus is God's ransom sent for you. Verse 21, through Jesus, you are believers in God.

And this God is the one who raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory. The same glory we will share with Him in that future reward. Therefore, Jesus' work is entirely God's work.

[24 : 34] He was made manifest by God. He was resurrected by God. He was glorified by God. If Peter could give this people any encouragement of a living hope, it is all thanks to God the Father who did these things through His Son, the Redeemer.

That's why verse 21 ends saying, your faith and hope are in God. Brothers and sisters, God's love can be trusted.

His fatherhood is good for us. If He demands holiness, it's because holiness is good for us. If He causes us to live in reverent fear of Him, it's because that kind of fear is good for us.

After all, He's the one who sent Jesus to ransom us from our sins. That's the gift we must remember while we imitate and fear the Father. in a very costly way, He has proven to be for us by the shedding of His blood.

And now, for our final identity-shaping gift in verses 22 to 25, we have received a word that enables love. A word that enables love.

[25 : 46] I think we can all relate to our time in our lives when we thought that we were doing something amazing as kids just to find out later that it was our parents doing it all along.

Kara and I have these friends on campus. They used to live on campus, Jason and Elizabeth, and they have this very cute boy, Brooks. When we first met him, Brooks was just one year old.

He was a one year old baby, and when they hosted us the first time in their house, Brooks came running towards me, half running, half crawling, and walking a little bit.

And without saying any words, he gave us this drawing that he had made, which it did have a bunch of scribbles everywhere, but right in the center of it, with big, beautiful, perfect English letters, said, Welcome, Salvianos.

We did feel very welcome that day. I didn't know any better, so I turned to Brooks and said, Wow, Brooks, this is so cool. I can't believe you already know how to write.

[26 : 53] And people started laughing that day, too, for some reason. I really thought he had drawn up the letters, even though I knew he couldn't read them, but I thought, as a one year old, sure, he had the coordination to do, to write something.

It was only later that night, we were having dinner, and I suddenly realized, wait a minute, it was probably Elizabeth who wrote the letters, and he only did the scribbles. I didn't say it all out.

In my defense, though, you can actually look at it from both sides. Because, on one side, the drawing was partially Brooks, because he did put a lot of artistic effort into it, but on the other side, the part of the drawing that put into words, what Brooks wanted to communicate, that was all Elizabeth's.

His work and her work are two sides of the same coin. They're two patterns of the same drawing.

One of the things Peter's describing in verses 22 and 23 is that the reality of our conversion, that is, our turning away from former passions and turning with faith to God, also has two sides.

ones. One of them is ours and the other is God's. On our side, Peter says in verse 22, that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth.

[28 : 20] On God's side, he says, verse 23, you have been born again through the living and abiding word of God. It's not an either or.

It's a both and kind of thing. Now, when you read that on our side, we were purified by obedience to the truth in verse 22, you might say, wait a minute, Peter, I thought we were saved by grace through faith.

What is this obedience that you're talking about here? Is Peter saying that we are saved by works instead? That's not at all how Peter is conceiving of obedience though.

After all, we should ask ourselves, what does it mean to obey a truth? Gravity will make you fall. That's a truth.

How do you obey it? By believing it and living by it. Because you believe in the truth of gravity, you don't jump off of a cliff expecting that you're going to fly away.

[29 : 22] When you not only refrain from jumping, you have obeyed gravity as truth. Likewise, we obey the truth of the good news about Jesus by believing in it and trusting in him as the highest treasure of our hearts.

And this obedience purifies us, not because of the intensity of our believing, but because of the quality of the work of the one in whom we believe. It is Jesus' precious blood that has been sacrificed to ransom us from a former way of living.

sin. We obey this by believing in it and as a result living as people who have been set free from sin. And if that's the case, what's the biggest evidence that we're living in light of the truths that we believe about Jesus?

Jesus himself says it elsewhere, by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. John 13, 35. Love is the distinguishing attribute of our obedience to the truth of who Jesus is.

If we were purified from the passions of our former ignorance and from the futile ways inherited from our forefathers, this is what we were purified for. You see, for Christians, for us Christians, love has become the new organizing principle of our lives.

[30 : 54] We were purified for love, so our relationships should be more than anything marked by a distinguishing flavor of love. It should be the thing that stands out the most about us.

We're supposed to be doing it earnestly. And I imagine, especially if you don't know the Lord yet, that this calling is one of the most compelling aspects of our new identity.

I mean, it can be pretty hard to love other people, people, but we sure love to be around those who do it well, right? And maybe that's what brought you to visit this church today.

Some loving people in your neighborhood who are just too nice for it to be mere friendliness. You asked them once what was unique about their lives, and soon enough, you're in a place that you thought you never would step foot into.

You're in this church. You're listening to God's word. My job now is to answer that question for you. Where does this love come from? What is God's identity shaping gift that enables love to become true in our lives?

[32 : 03] Peter says that there is a reason why we can and should love each other earnestly.

Verse 23, it is because you have been born again. And I don't want you to be intimidated by that phrase if you don't know what it means.

Christians are made new when they begin to follow Jesus. This is what it means to be born again. Starting from our hearts, which is our body's center of operation, which takes every desire we have in forming all of our decisions.

Starting from there, our old life that was ruled by sin has given way to a new life ruled by the Spirit of God. One that leads to holiness.

One that leads to abundant joy. One that leads to self-sacrificing love. And the gift of God that enables that to become possible, the imperishable seed that causes us to be born again is the living and abiding word of God.

You can see that the little section of verses 24 to 25 is formatted different in your Bibles. It is indented because it is a quote from a song in the book of the prophet Isaiah chapter 40.

[33 : 18] This song is how Isaiah celebrates God's plan for redeeming his people Israel and it was written hundreds of years before Jesus came into the world. The prophet Isaiah listens to God's

word of promise and though it is far yet from being realized, he rejoices and celebrates because he knows that unlike anything else, the word of the Lord endures forever.

But then Peter says, and this is really powerful, Peter says that the same word that the prophet Isaiah spoke of hundreds of years before is the good news that was preached to you. Look at how amazing this is. The word of God that promised restoration to Israel in Isaiah 40 is the good news of the gospel that was preached to you. This word is what Peter says is the ultimate cause of us being born again.

We are only able to be born into this family, to be adopted as God's children because his word has made it happen. After all, earlier in verse 11, before our passage, Peter made it clear that this word was preached to us by the Holy Spirit.

And when the Holy Spirit preaches these words, they cease to be merely human words. And they become God's creative power. Just as much as it was in Genesis 1, he creates new life in you when by the Spirit you hear what he says.

[34 : 55] Friends, thousands of years later, this abiding word of God is still causing people to be born again. And that's the kind of community he invites you to be a part of.

A holy people of obedient children who conduct their lives with fear. They trust their Redeemer and most of all, who love one another earnestly.

This is the kind of community that in this world, we show that we belong to a different world. This is the kind of community that when we live like it, when we live in it, we show that we belong to a different kingdom.

When we live like this, we show that we are placing our hopes in something other than anything else that this world has to offer. We set our hopes fully on the second coming of Jesus Christ, which is where he calls our hearts to be.

As we conclude then, I want to extend a final call to you. And I'm thinking particularly of you who are not familiar with these things yet. They have not become personally real to you so far.

[36 : 05] My hope is that the new identity God calls his people to live in is compelling enough that you would at least consider investigating the faith somewhere. A community marked by sacrificial love and who strives to follow in the footsteps of Jesus should make you think twice before rejecting this faith and the hope that it offers.

I encourage you to read the rest of this book of 1 Peter. Find out what this is all about and talk to someone from here about it. I'm sure the Lord has many things to show you in that.

And I also want to address those of you who have been very much believers for a long time. Maybe this message was difficult to you because it is yet another list of things you're failing to live by.

You're not holy enough. You don't fear the Lord as you should. You don't love others as yourself.

I'm right there with you in that struggle. If that is your case I want to remind you that God's call for a new life comes after his gifts of a new identity.

Before God ever tells you therefore do this he always says because I have done this. Remember your redeemer. And may this word today serve as a reframing of all the imperatives in the Bible.

[37 : 31] They're not a list of what you got to do to turn his frown into a smile. But they're the outflow of the love of the triune God for you. It is the outflow of the love of your Holy Father.

The outflow of the love of the redeeming son. The outflow of the love of the spirit in his word. So receive his gifts gratefully and live in light of your new identity.

humanity. Let's pray. Dear God thank you for your love for us. Thank you because in your love you have given us many gifts that change who we are.

And you have promised to us a new kingdom which we hope for. Help us to live as hopeful people. As people are waiting for that kingdom. May we show the world that we belong to a different kingdom to a different world.

And may you shape us daily to live in this new identity by the power of your enduring love. Amen. Amen. Thank you.