

Living in Babylon

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Preacher: Jon Moffitt

- [0 : 0 0] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.
- And now, today's sermon. I was asked recently if I believe in guardian angels. And Hebrews 1 tells us that the angels are ministering spirits to those who are saved.
- And I think I had one minister to me one last night because I left my iPad on top of my wife's car as she drove around town. And I still have it. So, whatever that angel was, thank you.
- This morning we're going to cover 1st 13 first. Which is in between the two that we're going to be finishing with. And at the end, I'm going to then tie 12, 13, and 14 all together.
- As we conclude the letter. Peter uses a phrase that seems harmless at first glance. But it has a huge implication to what he is concluding about this letter and to the readers.
- [1 : 1 1] Peter closes with this phrase in verse 13. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings. To understand what Peter means by this wordplay, you would have to understand two key components.
- One, Old Testament history, specifically Israel and its exile in Babylon. And then number two, the war between the spiritual realms. Lately, I've had people asking me, why am I so focused on the spiritual realm and the Old Testament?
- The characters that are involved in the Old Testament. This is why, right here. We don't understand how the New Testament writers, the apostles, use the Old Testament.
- And we often miss very important instructions or comforts. And we overlook these little phrases and missing the point. And we just move on.
- I used to believe that we really need to just focus in on what the primary obvious texts are. And anything that is obscure, we don't quite understand. Well, we just need to move on.
- [2 : 1 9] And I would have ways of justifying that. Until you read something like 2 Timothy 3.16, most of you should probably know this verse. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness.
- He didn't say most of it, some of it, or these parts. He said all of it. And I think we need to take that to heart. So this would include the weird passages about the strange stories in the Bible.
- Nothing ended up in our holy scriptures by accident. We are told it was moved by God and protected by Him. So the more we ignore all that God has given to us to know about Him, the weaker we become in our faith and more vulnerable against the attacks of our evil one.
- This is what we were warned with last week when we looked at Peter's warning. He says, Satan is a lion seeking who may devour. And on the heels of that, he makes a reference to Babylon. This is another word picture from Peter.

He's used many of them to help us ground our faith and create some identity to what we believe. These are some of the word pictures he's used in the past. Priests and temples, exiles, gold and silver, sheep and shepherds, holy nations, fiery trials, clothed with humility.

[3 : 36] These are all examples. We understand most of these. We know what a fiery trial is. We know what a sheep and a shepherd. But then he says a phrase like she who is in Babylon.

Well, this can't be the actual Babylon because Babylon was destroyed hundreds of years before this point. So he can't be referencing the letter is from Babylon.

We do know that it's from Rome. It's a word play. It's a word play that eventually becomes known as John uses it in his revelation, the spirit of Babylon.

She is in reference to the church. Here are really the two pictures that we are creating in the contradiction. Peter is saying the kingdom and his bride called the church is still in Babylon because of the spirit of Babylon exists in Rome.

And also, we're going to learn, exists everywhere. The contrast would be to the kingdom that we have. There's a counterfeit kingdom. There's a false kingdom. It's ran by Satan. And Peter is picking up on this.

[4 : 46] And the counterfeit bride to this kingdom is Babylon. It's the contrast. So the Bible uses this picture to describe the two kinds of spirit that take place.

It's either the spirit of Christ in his church that is in the world or the spirit of Babylon. Turn with me to Revelation chapter 17. John's going to give us the full picture of this woman who has intoxicated our world.

When it speaks of the spirit of something, it's the influence. Thinking of alcoholic spirits and how it influences and intoxicates. He's using this. There's an influence.

There's something that's intoxicated our world. Before we begin, I want to tell you the back story of Revelation 17 and how it got its name.

It's a story of rebellion and power. The fictitious woman gets her name from the great city of Babylon. But the story doesn't begin at the city.

[5 : 48] It actually begins at a smaller name called the Tower of Babel. The tower that they were building in Genesis right after the flood and the debacle with Genesis chapter 6.

This first rebellion. The first attempts of the gods to take over the world and create a new kingdom. A kingdom of their own worship. To which they failed. And we learn in Hebrews, God chained them up in gloomy darkness for it.

There's a second attempt that happens to bring these gods and their powers back. And this tower is known what's called a ziggurat. It's not. They weren't so foolish to think that they could build a ladder into the sky.

That's how it was taught to me. How blind and foolish were these people. They could build a ladder to God. No, they were building a platform to the gods.

The design of it was really a temple. It was to draw down the presence and the power to which they had experienced of the days of old. That's how they would describe it. They saw what the gods provided before the days of Noah's flood.

[6 : 52] And they wanted to reinstate that power and that relationship. And it's interesting as you pay attention to what the story of Babylon teaches us. Or the tower of Babylon teaches us.

That what did God say at the beginning of creation and then after the flood he reinstates it. He says, I want you to disperse out into the world. And I want you to spread out and fill the earth.

Oh, but man in his wisdom says, oh no, no, no. We're much more powerful and we're much stronger if we stay together. And so they did not obey God and they stayed together.

And then as they stayed together they saw the strength that they had in number. And they saw the strength that they had in wisdom. And so what does it say in the story? They wanted to make a name for themselves.

We don't really use that phrase today. But what they're saying is we want to demonstrate our power. We want to prove our power. And so we're going to reclaim the relationships that we once had before.

[7 : 53] And we know that reclaiming these relationships will bring that very power. And so they built the tower to create this and reinstate the worship of the gods. Which is what the Old Testament constantly tells us about Israel's plague of the worship of the gods.

So you have a one world rule. And now you're having a one world religion. Is this starting to sound familiar?

And what is it that they wanted to do? They wanted to reinstate power for everyone. Equality. This spirit of Babylon has been seen throughout the generations.

Throughout thousands of years. And we're still erecting temples. And we're still erecting idols. You used to even go to the inauguration of this city where you got the dead Daniel.

And he's got an idol of himself. King Nebuchadnezzar. And he's requiring all of Israel to worship it. Right? To bring it under its power. Do you know there are still nations erecting idols of their leaders.

[8 : 55] And calling them to bow down to them. The spirit is still alive. We'll see it in different ways. But God destroys Satan's plan in the tower. And he pulls together.

Pulls apart their army. Pulls apart their plan. And disperses them by changing their languages. Later on in history you learn is that in this very location where the tower were first built.

A city becomes. A city is built. We know it as Babylon. And Babylon becomes a extreme powerhouse in the world.

And it is in the story of Israel that Israel is then captured by Babylon. And they are enslaved. And they are known as exiles. This is where you read stories like Daniel.

And Ezekiel. Jeremiah. The city was so evil and powerful. That even when the city was finally destroyed. Israel held on to this idea of what was present in the city.

[10 : 01] It was so wicked. And it was so driven by lust and sensuality. That the prophets would reference the attitude that took place in Babylon.

And what they were forced to see. Some of Israel gave in to it. Some of them became part of the system. A part of the attitude. They drunk in the spirit. And some of them resisted as we see from the three Hebrews.

Or from Daniel who ended up in the lion's den. Or those in the fire. But the spirit of Babylon represented the powerful influence Satan's army has. Had and has upon the people.

So John in the early church is writing. He's writing to a church that is very much what Peter is doing. They're underneath intense suffering. They're struggling. They're hurting.

They're fighting for their faith. They're feeling it all around them. And instead of Peter speaks more in practical language. Talking about the government and their work. Their job. And kind of referencing pictures.

[11 : 01] John just writes in pure metaphor. He's describing almost this fanciful story. Using big language of dragons and thin headed things.

To help you understand what's happening in the spiritual realm. As it influences the physical realm. This is, read to me Revelation chapter 17 verse 1. Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me.

Come. I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute. Who was seated in many waters. With whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality. And with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

And he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names. And it had seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet. And adorned with gold and jewels and pearls. Holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations.

[12:06] And the impurities of her sexual immorality. So this is the introduction that we get to this woman. Who's called the mother of Babylon.

The harlot. The mother of the harlot of Babylon. And I want to point out a couple of things. Because Peter. Peter's making one word reference. Talking about those who are in Babylon.

So we can understand his meaning. And it helps us really understand his letter. I want us to see three important characteristics of the spirit of Babylon. This woman to fictitiously that we are speaking of that influences our world.

Here's the first characteristic that John points out. It's that she is beautiful. She is beautiful. One is not repulsed by her approach when she brings seduction.

It says that she was adorned with gold and jewels and pearls. Holding in her hand a golden cup. She doesn't show up like an old hag.

[13:10] Or a demon that is red. And has a snarl on his face with horns. To we would all say, oh evil. No, she shows up. And she's atticing. She's pleasing to the eye.

She's powerful with her capacity to draw humans away. And leads people towards her poison because of her beauty. Look at verse 4.

It says, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. The imagery there is that the enticement of the spirit doesn't come to you in a dog bowl.

It comes to you in a golden cup. Something that's to be cherished and valued. James and John describe her as the spirit of fornication or the spirit of adultery.

Or friendship with the world. The lust of the eyes and the pride of life. This is all wrapped up in the imagery. One commentator spoke of befriending this woman in this way.

[14:15] This is what it results in. The lust of the flesh is an inordinate love for physical indulgence like eating, sleeping, and sexuality. The lust of the eyes is an inordinate love for material things.

And the pride of life is an inordinate love for human recognition, ambition, and position. So when the spirit of Babylon comes telling or calling for you to drink from the cup, these are the desires, these are the feelings.

I would say it this way. This is the evidence of her presence in our culture or in our own life. But John doesn't just tell us that her seductive beauty is localized maybe in a few places.

It's not necessarily in every country. I mean, obviously it can't be in the United States because, well, we're a Christian nation. John goes to tell us there is no nation free from her seduction.

She's everywhere. That is point two. She is beautiful, but this woman is everywhere. Look at Revelation 17. Revelation 17 at the end of the verse. It says, the great, 17.1, sorry, 17.1 says, The great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

[15 : 39] And then scroll down or look down to verse 17. This is how you know you're in a modern age. It's not turned, but scroll. Revelation 17 and verse 18. It says, And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.

This is John describing what he is seeing from the angel as a picture of what's going on worldwide, not only in his present day, but throughout history, referencing her as the great dragon, the Babel, the woman of Babylon.

And this is why Peter tells us we are exiles. No matter where you live, we are sojourners because of everyone who lives in the world is under this influence, has drunken the poison.

It's from the leaders down. He says, even the kings are influenced by her poison. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2. I want you to connect the spirit of Babylon to even how Paul describes every single human being before they have found freedom in sight, before they have been cleansed or purified of this poison that's in their heart.

Paul describes it this way in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 1. Speaking of your soul, so you understand, he's not talking about your body. He's talking about your soul. And you are dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

[17 : 03] So there's activity happening. We actually are moving and making decisions. But what decisions are we making? Following the course of this world.

Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit, this woman of Babylon, that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived, in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.

This doesn't give us the indication that it's some, but everyone is a prison to her poison. Satan's bride has married herself to the world, and they indulge in her love.

And this brings us to our third and final characteristic of her. She is beautiful. She is everywhere. And this is the part that we often ignore. She is powerful.

As John saw this vision, if you go back to Revelation chapter 17 and look at verse 6 with me, as John saw this vision of this description of what's happening to the world, listen to how John reacts himself.

[18 : 24] And he writes it down so we understand just the power behind this influence. Revelation 7, 6, 17, 6. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

And when I saw her, I marveled greatly. He marveled at her capacity to inflict pain on those who stood for Christ.

This beast is at war with our king, is the description. And until he returns, our king, there is no judgment.

Judgment day is coming, and all will be cast into the fire, the lake of fire. But until then, we are going to feel this. I think the reason why I say it this way, and I want you to feel this, is that this is no cartoon character that really has no bearing on your life.

Satan wants you, and to think of him and his capacities, and that to which he leads, as little red devils who sit on our shoulder, and tell us little funny jokes. And there's nothing really to be feared here.

[19 : 39] It's fine. John says he was overwhelmed by what he saw. The power she had to cause destruction, even in creation.

Going back to Peter's use of the phrase, if you turn back with me, think of what we have already heard from Peter. It makes complete logical sense that he would then sign off, reminding his readers where it is they are reading this letter from.

In the power of Babylon. See, we always take so many months and years to finish a book. But you understand when this letter was read by Peter, it would be read in one sitting.

And they would hear it from beginning to end. They would be able to see the conclusion of what Peter is saying. John tells us there is a battle, and the battle will end, but today is not that day, and it won't come until he returns.

And he's encouraging us not to drink from her cup. Her beauty does not entice us if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. We don't want to hear her seduction.

[20 : 59] We don't want to drink in her pleasure. So using all of Peter's letter, and then we'll finalize it with the last two verses, I just want to do a recap of Peter's letter in light of this word picture, the spirit of Babylon.

Peter gives the church three motivations to keep themselves from the influence of this power, the influence that has been inflicting the people of God from the moment of the Tower of Babel all the way till today, underneath the influence of Satan, the roaring lion.

And here are the three motivations that Peter wants us to remember. First of all is this. We live a different story. We live a different story.

Our story is about something other than what we can accomplish on this earth. This corrupt place does not bind us to its ways.

We don't define ourselves. By our bodies, our bank accounts, our achievements here, this woman's poison has corrupted everything, and everyone is identified and defined by who they are.

[22 : 19] We even have to introduce ourselves with pronouns now so to make sure that we get the identification correctly. You understand how illogical that is, and that is the mind of someone who is poisoned.

To think that we can take advantage of another person's body, force ourselves on top of them to receive pleasure is only the results of poison.

To assume that to murder a body that lives inside of me because it's going to remove my freedom and remove my financial capacity is a mind that is poisoned.

Their story is developed, and it is driven by them, and their poison. And Peter is saying, our story is not defined by this poison by ourselves.

Our story is defined by a king who loved us and freed us and opens our eyes and what we live for and as the story develops and who we become in the story of God is based on freedom.

[23 : 23] It's based on an identity that is not dictated by poison, but it's dictated. Hear this. It's dictated by a God who proved his love.

So when you stand up and introduce yourself to someone and they say to you, what's your story? How do you identify? We say, loved by the king of kings, cared for by the God of gods, and forever saved by the Lord of lords.

Can I tell you of his great, great love? Our story is so different. But church, we have to remember that we are engaging in a world and it's not a safe place.

You see, the poison within their hearts and their minds, their own passions, they're not being forced to do this, they want to. They continue to drink in more and more of the lies and it indulges in their passions and they have small moments of gratification, but they never fully satisfy, so it causes us to go deeper and deeper and deeper into sin and debauchery.

It's not safe to drink in these lies. Listen, I have done it and you do it. It's so enticing. It looks so good.

[24 : 45] Everyone around seems to enjoy it free of problem. Because that's where we are looking through the story lens of self-gratification and that our world can be a place free from sin and free from trial.

But that's not true. When we look at it through the eyes of our king, the story is, child, what you will be, you are not yet. And this world is under a horrible curse that brings violence and cancer and death.

But the story does not end there. The story ends when I come back and I make all things right. In that you hope. Which leads us to our second point.

We have a different story from the world because we have a different storyteller. Number two, we have a different hope because we have a different hope giver. See, the hope that we have in Babylon is what we can get for ourselves.

What can we get out of this? The spirit of Babylon advertises that we can have all our desires now. This is what we are being sold by our candidates.

[25 : 57] Uh-oh. John's getting political. He never gets political. Don't worry. We're going to talk about Jesus. That's who you vote for. Amen. Come on, let's keep going. We are told by candidates they can solve our problems.

They can fix our world. Now, some of them probably can reduce suffering and pain. Some of them can probably protect the innocent in some ways.

But they will never, mind you, no matter how much power you think they have or whatever country you think has a power, they will never be able to defeat Babylon.

She is filling them with her poison and they are the ones promising you relief. Do not believe them. We only believe one king.

We only believe one story. There's only one who gives us hope. This is why we have to pay attention to Peter's letter. Peter, stand firm in your faith that which you have not seen but that which you know is true because what you have seen is lying to you.

[27 : 03] There is no hope outside of this world. So Peter says, God's grace keeps our eyes open to his love and we are motivated by what we see for us so that our hope doesn't go into sexual or mental or physical, emotional, financial gratification.

We need to look at that and say, these are but tools to either draw us into the world or tools used for the kingdom of God but I cannot put my hope in them and every single person in this room, every single, everyone including me, we've put our hope into the poison and as soon as we drank it, we felt the sickness, haven't we?

We feel the guilt and the shame. We know it didn't satisfy fully. It had a moment of ecstasy. It had a moment where we thought possibly, yes, I can have relief from this world.

I can have relief from my shame. I can look beautiful. I could be different. I can have significance and then the poison set in and sickness says, oh, it wasn't quite enough.

I think I need more and so what do we do? We go back to the cup to get a little bit more until Peter says we're intoxicated. This is why he says, guard your mind, wash your mind, purify your mind, prepare your mind for action because Satan wants to destroy you with his poison.

[28 : 25] Babylon tells us that you are what you do. The king says this, forgiven. You are not defined by what you've done.

Loved unconditionally. Righteous by gift, not by earning. You're a priest. You actually represent God now.

You house him in your body. You're a temple. You're an ambassador. You actually draw people to God. And listen to this, you're his child. All of that defines you.

All of that is the explanation of your new existence. So therefore, our hope is in the one who forgave us, loved us, gave us righteousness, called us into his ministry and says, you are my child.

And your hope is not here. And that is so hard because I'm telling you, I feel it. I want there to be no more pain and suffering. I don't want anybody to hurt anymore. But the hope that Jesus says is the only hope they have is in the gospel.

[29 : 33] The good news that Jesus in his time will make all things right. Don't fall for the temporary. We all live microwaved lives. My wife warns me that I'm putting cancer in my body every time I use the microwave.

I'm like, yeah, but that food tastes good when it's hot right away. Thirdly, so we live a different story.

We live a different hope. And we live by different rules. What do you think about what the rules of Babylon give us is this. Babylon says, if you obey her, you will be advanced with power.

And they intoxicate her minds. And you can see the power growing. The agendas that are being forced upon us with actual consequences. If we say no to this agenda, you will see that you become the weak one.

This is why he writes to the church and says, listen, if you stand up for righteousness for righteousness sake, you will suffer. People are experiencing the power of the agendas that are being driven through all kinds of agendas that are out there.

[30 : 52] It doesn't matter if it's based on race or gender or sexuality. The voices are gaining volume and people can feel the voices gaining volume so they join these sides so they can become relevant and they can experience the power and the freedom they have to do as they please.

But our rules are very different. We live for the glory and the power of another. We're not seeking power for ourselves or glory for ourselves. We're not trying to justify our actions.

We don't want, we don't need people to approve of us. Because we look to what Christ has done and his love is sufficient. I was listening to this song on the way in.

I can't remember the title of it but the words go something like, if all I have is Jesus then I have all that I need. If all I have is Christ then I lack nothing and I'm not in need.

That's a concept that is hard for us to believe but the rule is, child, seek first Christ and everything else you think you need he will provide.

[32 : 04] So remember what type of power that they're under. They're under an intoxicating power that forces them to indulge and use means that are only tearing down.

I mean, remember Jesus says that Satan seeks to kill, to steal, and to destroy. But how do we live? We live in a light that we draw people towards a loving, caring, forgiving God who sets them free and empowers them with his own spirit and promises them a new life.

Destruction by poison and life through love. We live by different rules. The kingdom of Babylon lives under the rule of approval.

We seek self-approval. We want to be approved. Social acceptance is a powerful drug that Babylon uses to control his people. And church, we often find ourselves wanting to be relevant in our culture.

We want those whom we love and respect. And these people are beautiful and smart. They have great argumentation. It seems logical. Our Bible seems old and archaic and weird and mean.

[33 : 13] I mean, come on, John. We're talking about talking donkeys and we're talking about whales and fish. I mean, you know, maybe they have a point. I mean, we're over here trying to explain how fish swallow and vomit people and donkeys talk and they're over here talking about how we can protect people.

I mean, this seems irrelevant. I mean, yeah, so there were gods and stuff and there might be a guy named Satan but over here we're talking about the real problems of life. And so we get drawn into being in the relevant crowd.

Let me tell you what, the only thing that is relevant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The only thing that has the power to change someone's heart from life to death to set them free from the poison is Christ.

So I don't need to be accepted by whatever agenda that is being given to us over here. Babylon defines love. Their rule is love is defined by self-gratification and lust.

Do you make me feel good? If you meet that rule then I will give you my love. And the opposite is the king says, while you were my enemy I loved you. As a matter of fact I proved my love for you that when you are at the worst you possibly could be I ended up dying for you in your place.

[34 : 29] There's nothing you could do to get my love. The rule is believe, accept, enjoy. We now live in light of these proclamations.

These are the three ways, these are the three comforts that Peter gives the church and so now we'll come in with these verses because the salutations do matter.

Sometimes we do write them off and they're not significant to us but these salutations matter. This is how he includes the letter and concludes it. 1 Peter 5, 12 But Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, maybe had the one who dictated the letters most likely why or delivered the letter for him.

I have written briefly to you exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. This is so comforting.

Not your talents, not your disciplines, not your accomplishments, not your past, not your future. Interesting, where does he tell you to stand? Walk off of the platform into the scary abyss of life standing firm on what?

[35 : 55] Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. The way you survive through the land of Babylon is not by effort, strength, or power of oneself.

You don't go through it looking to the efforts and the abilities of what you can do to resist and fight. May I define grace. It is God's unconditional love.

It's all of his blessings. It's all of his promises. It's all of his power through the means of Christ's righteousness given to you fully without requirement and protected by his power.

He says, stand there. Don't go anywhere else. Be firm there. I love it. And Paul says in Ephesians, he's like, you're going to be shot at by Satan in his fiery darts.

He goes, stand in the strength of the Lord and the power of his might. And then you know what he tells you? He tells you about the grace of God in Christ. Every piece of armor is God's grace in Christ applied to you.

[37 : 04] Salvation, strength, shod with the feet, all of it is God's grace and mercy in Christ towards you. What I have come to realize is this, church.

when we don't see a need for grace, then we will not stand in grace. The writers of the New Testament are putting a massive warning on us.

If you want to stand in your own righteousness and in your own strength, you will be destroyed by Babylon. And God's law will prove you are not worthy of God's love or his forgiveness.

It says God loves those to whom he keeps his commandment. Do you really want to stand before God on judgment day and say, I kept your commandment to love you, therefore I deserve your love?

Do you really want to do that? Because only the blind will accept that challenge because they think it's achievable. He does not say stand in the strength of your love.

[38 : 13] This is important, church. He does not say stand in the strength of the level of your faith. I have 100% faith or I have 5% faith.

I may have a fraction of faith, but he does not tell you to stand in your faith. Did you notice this? Because it's not your faith that saves you. It's the object of your faith.

Do you understand this? When I get into a plane, it does not matter how much I trust that pilot. It's the ability of the pilot on that plane to get me where I'm going whether I trust him or not.

Are you tracking with me? Some of you are the clingers like, and some of you are the sleepers like me. Like, let me know when we get there. He does not say stand in the level of your faith.

He says, stand in grace. And God's grace is sufficient to supply all our needs. This is so important. But you will not want to stand in here if you don't really believe in the threat of Babylon.

[39 : 10] You don't really believe in the threat of Satan. You don't see yourself as intoxicated. If you're tired of your sin, you're tired of your intoxication, you're tired of seeing that there is no hope in this world, some of you get up every day and go, I don't even know why I live.

I don't even know what my story is. I don't even know what my purpose is because you've listened to the world for too long and the significance of your life is in what you have done in your body, how you look, your bank account, how other people perceive you.

That is not your story. Your story is that you have a God who created all things, who loves you and his love comes to you 100% of the time by grace alone.

And Peter says, to survive in Babylon, to reach the moment of hope, you stand in grace and nothing else. Which then leads us to verse 14.

Peter says something we kind of write off and really it's embarrassing for us. But I think it's significant. He says this, verse 14, greet one another with the kiss of love.

[40 : 14] Sometimes Paul says it with a holy kiss. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. Now how many of you, well I know all the boys in high school are like, we should practice this for sure.

But that's what we do with it, right? It's just funny. You'll notice that six different times the New Testament writers tell each other to kiss each other with a holy kiss. You ever wonder why?

Is it, do you think maybe just a cultural thing? Which that kind of fails because there's so many letters that go to so many different cultures that it kind of falls apart. It's not technically a cultural thing. How many of you, so my daughter's coming home next week.

And I haven't seen her for a while. And when that girl comes up out of that car, she might not even be able to get out of the car before I see her, she's gonna get a big old daddy hug.

Why? Because I love her and I want her to know I love her. And I want her to feel the expression of her daddy's love.

[41 : 22] Right? This is what Paul is getting, Peter is getting at. The grace that which we stand in, this affection of our king, he says, church, give it to each other.

And it actually is resulted in physical affection. I think the kissing part of it is cultural, but the affectionate part of it is not. Somebody said to me once, you're a huggy church.

I said, we're a loving church. There is something to physical proximity and the demonstration of love. And so I think that it's healthy to be reminded that to abandon each other in the city of Babylon and to, we've all known this, we've all felt, some of you, I get a hug from you every time I see you and I can tell you, my heart, I'm gonna start doing this.

I'm gonna wear a heart rate monitor that has like a number right here and as soon as you hug me, you'll watch it go boop, boop, boop, boop, boop, boop. It just, I just, there's something that calms me being in your presence, feeling your affection, feeling the way that you hug me.

I mean, Curtis is my big papa dad hugger, man, like come here buddy, give me a hug. The reason I mention this is that life is really hard.

[42 : 40] Living in Babylon is exhausting. And Peter wants us to stand in God's grace and then love each other in that grace and in order to do that, it requires proximity.

It requires us to be with each other. It requires us, you hear this out, to hug someone requires vulnerability. And I will say there's an appropriate and inappropriate way of doing this.

I'm gonna ask you to use discretion. Well, as we finish the letter, Peter is gonna pick some of these subjects back up in the coming letter.

But if you take away anything, these are the two points I hope you walk away with. You cannot wander in this world indulging in your sin and be free from the poison.

But you are not left without hope. You aren't called to try harder, be better, do more. It says, come, live in the grace of your king until he returns.

[43 : 46] This is comforting, church. This means we set aside the weight and the sin that besets us and we look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. We protect our minds from intoxication.

We protect our minds from being controlled. And we lead our homes in the grace of our king. And all God's people said, amen.

Let's pray. Our Father, as intense and scary as this world sounds, I feel utterly safe in your arms. But yet I am terrified by my flesh.

And I'm terrified by the enemy around me. Lord, may your grace be what protects us as a church. Lord, when I am afflicted, they are afflicted.

And when they give into sin, it influences me. And when I give into sin, I influence them. May we be responsible. May we be aware. May we confess our sins. May we run in repentance back to the king.

[44 : 41] May we see holiness as a thing to be sweet and the poison of Babylon a thing to be rejected. Lord, give us your grace again in the means of your table that our faith would be strengthened with your presence.

In Christ's name, amen. Amen. Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where everyone is in equal need of grace.

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