

2.07.21 ~ Secured for God's Service, 1Peter 1:1-16

Read **1Peter 1:1-2...** Peter, writing to God's elect [those who believe & follow Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior]. He calls them aliens in the world [strangers, pilgrims, sojourners, exiles, foreigners]; for their true citizenship is in heaven.

Peter encourages these believers, who are suffering, as they faithfully live to serve God in a pagan society that is hostile toward God and His children.

The persecution of Christians is increasing every year. Over 340 million Christians are living in places where they experience high levels of persecution. Last year across the world:

- 4761 Christians were killed for their faith, about 13 every day
- 9,488 churches and other Christian buildings attacked
- 4,277 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned

The top ten out of 50 countries that are persecuting Christians, are North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Eritrea, Yemen, Iran, Nigeria, India.

Peter tells us that Believers are set apart by the work of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of obedience to Christ through the personal application of His blood.

Read **1Peter 1:3-5...** It is by God's great mercy that we have received forgiveness for our sins through Christ's shed blood, and eternal life through His bodily resurrection from the grave. God has made each of us a recipient of His Grace, protected by God's own power, forever.

Read **1Peter 1:6-7...** We are to rejoice in our new birth which is spiritual, incorruptible, and eternal; but mixed with our rejoicing is the reality that we will suffer, just as Christians all over the world are suffering. These sufferings prove our faith and confirm our salvation, bringing glory, honor and praise to God.

2Timothy 3:12, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,"

James 1:2-4, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Read **1Peter 1:8-9...** Our victory in suffering comes through obedience to the Faithful One who saved us, our faith in God gives reality and assuredness to things yet unseen and things yet fulfilled.

It is usually easier to trust something that we can see and/or touch, but **Hebrews 11:1-3** says, "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." **6**, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

I have never seen Christ, and yet I am convinced that I am eternally saved by believing in Him whom I have never seen. Believing without seeing takes faith. It is only by the merciful grace of God, made effectual through the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we can express the faith to believe and to trust Him.

Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

God has done everything to save us -- all we are asked to do is to believe Him by trusting His Son, Jesus Christ, for even the faith to believe is a gift from God.

Read **1Peter 1:10-12...** The OT prophets spoke about grace coming to Gentiles yet they didn't understand that Christ, the Holy One of God, would have to suffer and die in order for us to receive forgiveness from God.

The NT writers tell us that Christians are strangers in this world because they are citizens of heaven and members of God's own household.

Those belonging to God will, in some way, suffer on this earth at the hands of those who belong to the world, for the world opposes God and hates His followers! Jesus told His disciples (**John 15:18-19**), "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you."

1John 3:13, "Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you."

Read **1Peter 1:13...** We must prepare our minds for action, training ourselves to recognize and expose the deceit and lies of our enemy the devil, while trusting in the provisions and protection of God.

1Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer."

1Peter 5:8, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Ephesians 5:15-17, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

We are to be alert, to pay attention, remaining sober minded and self-controlled, always confident of God's grace and God's faithfulness as we obey God's instruction, as we exhibit a changed life.

Colossians 3:17, "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." **23-24**, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance."

Revelation 1:17-18, "I am the first and the last, the living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Revelation 22:12, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

Read **1Peter 1:14-16**... Our obedience, expressed in our belief and behavior, should conform to the Word of God and the Character of Christ.

Romans 12:1, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

Ephesians 5:1, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children."

We are to represent and imitate God, even in the midst of a pandemic, even if in subjection to a godless government. We are not to conform to the desires, attitudes, and behaviors we had when we were separated from God by sin; for we were either ignorant of His Word or in rebellion toward it, like those in the world today who continue to reject God's Son.

The people of the world are separated into many groups: gender, race, wealth, intelligence, disability, political party, religious belief and practice, etc.; but God only recognizes two groups of people: those who believe in and follow Christ and those who do not. No other division makes any difference in eternity.

John 11:25-26, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."

Romans 8:1-2, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

As Christians, the earth is not our permanent home; for we are pilgrims, foreigners, aliens really, and this earth is only our temporary home.

When you believe in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins—you are granted forgiveness for all your sins (past, present, future) and you are made spiritually alive [born again], for the purpose of pleasing your Father in heaven.

The majority of people, when exposed to the truth about Jesus Christ, will walk away unrepentant and unbelieving, unwilling to accept God's gift of forgiveness and eternal life through God's Son; mostly because they do not want to admit and repent of their sin.

On October 8, 1871 D.L. Moody had just given a stirring message to challenge the hearts of his listeners in the large meeting hall in Chicago. Moody, in closing, said this: "I want you to take home the question 'What shall I do with Jesus?' and come back next week with your answer."

That very night the great fire that destroyed Chicago began to rage. Many of the people Moody challenged to come back the following week with their response, concerning what they should do with Jesus, didn't have another week, many of them died that night, apart from a saving knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Never again did Moody close a message without making clear the urgency with which every individual must personally decide what they are going to do with the gospel of Christ.

As God's children, we are to be about the work of sharing God's message with unbelievers, a message of compassion mixed with urgency, for although salvation is free and salvation is eternally secure; there is no salvation apart from the forgiveness of sin, and there is no forgiveness apart from repentance.

2Corinthians 5:17-21, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Ephesians 1:13-14, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

The message we share with the world today, tomorrow, and for as long as we have breath, is the very same message that was proclaimed almost 2,000 years ago (**Mark 1:14-15**), "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" **17**, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

Christians are eternally secure, God has given us a new birth and a living hope through the death and resurrection of His Son; this is an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, for we are indeed God's possession, God's children, protected by God's power, so that we might apply God's Word to our life, where others will see Christ in us, and perhaps ask us to tell them the reason for the hope that we have, now and forever, Jesus Christ: Crucified, Resurrected, and Coming Again!

Pastor Mike

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