



WITH ZERO THREAT (PART 2)
Week 2

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for Chris Suitt and New Hope Church.

Closing prayer

Introduction:

If you were to ask the average person on the street, “Who is the greatest authority in your life?” Most would probably respond by saying, “Well, I am.” And they would be correct. That

is the underlying cultural religion of the day — the self. It is actually the most ancient of all false religions. What did the serpent say to Eve in the garden when tempting her to leave the rule and reign of God?

Genesis 3:5

⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The false promise of the false religion of self is that you can know good and evil apart from God. You can define good and evil according to your own thoughts and inclinations. That is the biblical definition of sin — when a person says, “I’ll define reality apart from God.”

And when you examine three or four of the defining cultural ideas of the day, they all bare this mark. We’ll decide when life in the womb begins or has value — says the abortion movement (which is an offshoot of feminism). We’ll decide how to define marriage and

sexuality — says the LGBTQ and the feminist movements. We'll decide what defines gender — says the transgender movement (which is often at cross-purposes with the rest of the LGB group and feminists).

These are all movements and ideas grounded in radical human individualism, which is just a fancy way of saying they are grounded in human self-centeredness and selfishness. “We will define reality apart from God.”

Last week we covered the authority which our culture may ignore but still struggles with (whether they admit it or not) because it's the underlying authority of all things. It's the underlying authority of reality — and the authority I am speaking about is Apostolic authority.

Apostolic authority is authority granted by God Himself. As I said last week in closing, just because the Apostle Peter is now dead doesn't mean his Apostolic authority on these pages wanes. He speaks to the church today

(and to everyone) with just as much authority as he did when he first wrote this letter.

- The critics

Acts 4:13

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¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

So, Peter wrote with Apostolic authority, which is what we covered last week in answering the question: Who do we listen to? Now the question is who was Peter writing to? And this gets to the crux of the question: **who are we?**

1 Peter 1:1-2

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**To those who are elect exiles of the
Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,
Asia, and Bithynia,**

He was writing to Christians who had been displaced. Now, in a like manner, we could say that Christians in our culture have been displaced. We no longer have a seat at the table of cultural influence. Other voices have the ear of the people. That's why we're going to find so much in this letter that applies to our current cultural moment.

But the reality is this just describes Christians in every age — elect exiles (pilgrims, aliens). This world is not our home is true of every generation of Christians. We are citizens of heaven, strangers in a strange land that grows ever stranger. We are Christian exiles in a secular land.

So, he's writing to the elect who are so:

² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,

Just as these Christians were in the situation they were in according to the foreknowledge of God, we are also. This means that nothing catches an all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere-at-once, in every-moment-at-once throughout the span of all-time, nothing catches this God off guard, which means — whatever culture we find ourselves in:

1. Nothing to feel threatened about here.

² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit,

He's going to continue to grow you into maturity in Christ. No matter what's going on, God's purpose for you cannot be thwarted. Your sanctification is guaranteed by your salvation. If you're saved, you'll grow. And you'll grow a certain direction. You will grow deeper into orthodoxy (right belief). But it will be an orthodoxy accompanied by orthopraxy (right practice). Your sanctification is guaranteed by your salvation.

So, no matter how much you feel culture pressing against your Christian beliefs:

2. Nothing to feel threatened about here.

Again, your sanctification is guaranteed:

for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

God saved us by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone so that we could follow Him as loving children. To be under grace now

means that we can do whatever we want. Now, that doesn't sound right unless you understand that the born again Christian wants to follow Christ.

Being under grace means that now we are not under the law. We are not judged by the law. Christ has taken that judgment upon Himself by dying for us. We are not under the law. We are under obedience because we have new hearts. That's exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying in Romans 6.

If your salvation was only transactional — Christ died for your sins — then you could claim to be forgiven without changing. But because salvation is both transactional — Christ died for your sins — and transformational — you've been given a new heart, you've been born again — you have to live a new life. It's not just that you can live a new life, but the Christian has to live a new life, because he or she is a new kind of human being, a new creation. “There is no such thing as a Christian who does not change.”

So, we are elect exiles:

² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

Notice the Trinitarian nature of how Peter expresses the identity of the elect exiles.

And because of who we are, elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God,

sanctified by the Holy Spirit for obedience to Jesus... grace and peace are multiplied to us.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Even in the worst cultural moment that we could ever imagine, we can know grace and peace. There is a superabundant supply of grace and peace for us in Christ Jesus. Peter prays that grace and peace would be multiplied to you. The question is: Do you know some experiential measure of God's grace and peace? If you do, you will know

more. That's why in the next verse Peter praises the Lord.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

First, he caused us to be born again. That's the theology of grace concerning our salvation — God did it. He caused us to be born again. Thank God He did it! And if God

did it, there's no undoing it. There is security in the Christian's relationship with God.

3. Nothing to feel threatened about here.

to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

It's a living hope because He's a living Savior. Christ has risen. Christians still experience the presence of the risen Christ today. In our time and in our lives, we know the risen Christ. The gospel is a living hope.

“Our hope is anchored in the past: Jesus rose!
Our hope remains in the present: Jesus lives!
Our hope is completed in the future: Jesus is
coming!” (1:5, 7, 13) — Edmund Clowney

And here’s how solid that hope is, a hope that
God maintains...

**⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable,
undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for
you,**

This is the emotional deposit Jesus has given you if you want to draw upon it — that His gospel is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. That His work in your life is imperishable, undefiled and unfading.

In the OT, God gave the land to Israel as an inheritance, so even as Israel wandered in the desert, this is what sustained them — the promise of their inheritance. That's who Peter is comparing us to — as Christians we are like Israel, aliens and pilgrims in the land, wandering around, but having a sure

inheritance. He's contrasting Canaan as the inheritance of Israel with our inheritance in heaven.

Isaiah tells us that Israel's inheritance was often "laid waste," but our inheritance is imperishable. Isaiah tells us that Israel defiled the land with their sinful behavior, but our inheritance remains undefiled. Finally, Isaiah tells us the judgments of God caused the land and those who lived there to "wither and fall," but our inheritance will not fade.

“Because our inheritance is in heaven, nothing on earth can alter or destroy it.” (Edmund Clowney)

And our inheritance is not simply a land or a new heavenly city, but God Himself. God, who keeps our inheritance safe, also keeps us.

So, however marginalized culture makes you feel:

4. Nothing to feel threatened about here.

When someone's beliefs are threatened, they often become agitated, defensive, evasive, dismissive. In other words, the emotional reaction is not that they're standing on something that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. And most of time the reason they feel this way is because they're not standing upon something like the resurrection of Jesus Christ, an event that has both historical and experiential merit.

This should not be the reaction of the Christian when confronted with the false ideas of our cultural moment.

The problem often for us is that our culture often presents these ideas with such sparkle and wit.

- AppleTV documentary - It's more than a little laughable to look to Hollywood for moral signaling.**

“In a profession in which nudity is normal and for which ‘the casting couch’ was coined, the boundaries were never easy to discern. This is one reason why Hollywood might be a bad place to base either a set of ethics to aspire to or a set of ethics which should be regarded as particularly emblematic of anything beyond the entertainment industry. Different standards always operated in Hollywood. It was the only industry in the twenty-first century in which someone still on the run for child-rap could be applauded, revered and even viewed as something of a victim by their

peers.” (Murray, Douglas. *The Madness of Crowds*)

If anything, rather than being threatened by culture, we should be able to lampoon it. Especially if you happened to witness the Super Bowl Halftime Show.

In the age of the MeToo Movement, you’d think we’d hear a little more uproar about that pretend strip show. Well, I guess if you lip sync you can only pretend to strip. Union rules.

“Where is the hope? I meet millions who tell me that they feel demoralized by the decay around us. Where is the hope? The hope that each of us have is not in who governs us, or what laws are passed, or what great things that we do as a nation. Our hope is in the power of God working through the hearts of people, and that’s where our hope is in this country; that’s where our hope is in life.” (Charles Colson)

We can live in hope, because Christ is risen.
And because Christ is risen we know who to
listen to and we know who we are.

5. Nothing to feel threatened about here.