

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Nate Hilgenkamp
Series: Forged
August 20, 2023

The Elect Exiles

1 Peter 1:1-5

**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,
Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the
Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and
sprinkled with his blood:**

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Praise to God for a Living Hope

**³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given
us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the
dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept
in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the
salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.**

How about that walkout video? I mean, come on, I'm ready to preach now. Well, I know you saw this in the other video that JP showed, but I just want to highlight one of my favorite things I've got to do in working with JP which is just to learn so much from him. Just watching that video showcases one of my favorite things I've gotten to learn from him and it is this: I've seen this exact encounter take place probably hundreds of times. Someone will come up to him and they'll say, "hey, I go to your church and I really love your church." And he just always stops them and just says, "Hey, well, I just want to make something clear. It is not my church. It's Jesus' church." There we go!

I've also heard him say something else. Parents of Baylor students will come up to him and they'll say, "Hey, my son or my daughter goes to your church, and they love your church." And he just always says, "Oh no. I just want you to know - hey I go to their church. This is their church just as much as it is my church - this isn't just my thing." And I just, I love that about him, that he doesn't see this as his place. He sees this as Jesus' place. And if you're new here, that's what we want to make sure that you know - that our commitment to you is that we're going to do all we possibly can do to help you know, love, and follow that Jesus.

Well, to start this morning, I just want to start with a story. I was the college pastor here for years and years and years, which meant I spent years and years and years of my life at the Chick-fil-A right next to Baylor's campus. I am shocked that they don't have, like, a plaque with my face on it when you walk in. I think I personally have kept their profits afloat for years now. This is an incredibly embarrassing story, but it's an incredibly true story. A few years ago, I went there like I did nearly every other day, and I go up to the cash register and there's this, like, super overeager

teenage kid working the cash register. Just excited to be there! And he goes, “Ben! So good to see you. What can I get for you today?” Sidenote, if we haven't met before my name is Nate. So, in that moment I've got a decision to make. I'm like, what do I do? Do I correct him? I am like, he's just a kid working at Chick-fil-A, he is just trying to do his job well, so I just ignore it. I placed my order - spicy chicken sandwich meal and Coke Zero. I get my meal. Come back like the next day or the day after and go up to the same cash register. He's working again. I get up there and I'm just praying that he forgot about me. And then he goes, “Ben! So glad you came back. What can I get for you today?” And in that moment, I just go, ‘I guess I'm Ben now.’ Like it's too awkward at this point. I've taken it too far to correct it. I can't do that. So, from that moment on, for the next few weeks, at Chick-fil-A I was Ben. I would walk up to the cash register, even when it wasn't him, and I'd say my name is Ben because I didn't want it to get back to him that like my name is Nate. I know, I know, I know! I might struggle with people pleasing.

And then one day - it truly went on for weeks - one day I go through the drive-thru by myself and I am in my car. They got their iPad out to take my order. They are like what's your name? I don't even think it was him, but I am like “My name is Ben.” And then I go through the drive-thru, and I get to the window and then my nightmare happened. One of my friends was working the window and he goes Nate, I'm so sorry. We totally blew it. We don't have your order. So, what can I make for you really fast? I think we missed it. And I just go, “By chance is there an order for a Ben?” He goes, “Oh yeah, it is the next one.” And I was like, “I accidentally, maybe, said that was my name.” And he just took the bag and was like, “I don't know what in the world is going on, but here's your food.” I'll never forget the feeling of leaving Chick-fil-A that day. I just remember driving away going I am sick and tired of this 16-year-old kid bullying me around. I'm sick and tired of the fact that he changed my name. From this moment on, I'm no longer going to be Ben. I'm going to go by Nate. And I've got good news for you today. Ever since that day I walked into that same Chick-fil-A, with my chest puffed out, I walk up and I say my name is Nate Hilgenkamp.

You see, I took a name from someone who had no power to name me. It's a ridiculous story. It's a true story and I bet it's your story. I bet yours just looks a little bit better. It looks a little bit different. Maybe for you, you didn't have a kid at Chick-fil-A rename you. But maybe one day, growing up, your mom said, “You know, you're not really as pretty as the other people.” And in the back of your mind, you just assume that's just who I am. In the back of your mind, you've been living by the name ‘Unattractive’. Maybe for you, you let a boyfriend name you. They just said, “You're just really not enjoyable to be around.” In the back of your mind, you just assume that's just who I am. So you just lived with the name ‘Unlikable’. Maybe for you, you've let a sin name you. Whatever it is - maybe it's lust or alcoholism or pride or whatever it is you just lived in that sin and you just let it rename you. You just assume that your name now is ‘Damaged Goods’. Or maybe you've let a coach or a teacher or someone influential in your life - a boss - name you. They just said, “You don't really seem to have as much talent and as much gifting as other people.” You just assumed that that was true. So, in the back of your mind, you just assumed that your name is ‘Forgettable’. Whatever it is for you, I bet you've been carrying a name for years now, but I'm just here this morning to tell you that you've taken the name from someone who has no power to name you.

So today, what we're going to do is we're going to look at the name that God has given you in Scripture. We are going to look at what that name is and what that name means for your life. And we're going to do that by opening up the book 1 Peter. So, if you have your Bibles open them up or turn them on, to 1 Peter. It's right before 2 Peter. So, find 2 Peter and then you'll be able to find 1 Peter. It is towards the end of the New Testament. The next several weeks we're going to be walking verse by verse through 1 Peter as we're going through this sermon series that we've called Forged.

Now, you might not know a whole lot about 1 Peter, and that that's OK. For many Americans, if you were to ask the average American Christian what their favorite book of the Bible is, you'd probably hear a certain number of responses. They might say Philippians because it's a book about joy. They might say John because it's a book about Jesus' love for us. Or a more charismatic Christian might say the book of Acts. Or a more theological minded Christian might say Romans. Or a more practical person might say James or Proverbs. As I was reading a commentary from a professor this week on 1 Peter, he said that one day in class he asked his class what their favorite book in the Bible was. And what was interesting was two people in his class said 1 Peter. So, he asked some questions of them, and he realized that they had something in common. Neither of them was from the United States. Each of them was from a country where Christians are persecuted. And he asked them, "Hey, why do you like 1 Peter so much?" And they just said, "Oh, almost everyone in our country loves 1 Peter because this book, most accurately, describes what it's like for us to follow Jesus in our country."

So, as we get into this book, we need to know what this book is about. 1 Peter is primarily about social marginalization and suffering. For Peter, this would be normative to the believer. If you're going to follow Jesus, you're going to be an outcast and you're going to go through suffering. But I also want to make it clear that 1 Peter is not just about marginalization and suffering, but primarily about hope in the midst of it. And just to give you some more background on 1 Peter, here's what was happening at this time. 1 Peter was likely written in 63AD, and this was the time in which persecution was really starting to ramp up for the church. In fact, this was written during the time of Nero's reign over the Roman Empire. He was the emperor at the time. If you know anything about him, he was an incredibly depraved man. Here's an example of that: Historians believe that that Nero actually kicked his wife to death, murdered her, and shortly thereafter found a young boy who he thought looked like his ex-wife. Then he took that young boy, married that boy, castrated that boy, and then made him dress up and act like he was his old wife. It is wicked stuff. This is who the emperor was at the time. And not only that, but this was written in 63AD and then the year after in 64 AD there's a massive fire across Rome. It burned up nearly 3/4 of the city. It just caused massive destruction. Many historians believe that Nero actually set the fire himself so he could burn the city down and then rebuild it however he wanted it to be rebuilt. Once the fire had been put out, Nero had to put the blame on somebody. He had to point the finger at somebody. So, he said, "Hey, Christians did this. This was the fault of the Christians." So, from that moment on, he would gather up Christians and kill many, many, many of them. He would kill some of them in the arena via animals. Some of them would die on crosses. Some of them they'd be raised up and they would be burned at the stake. This is what was coming for the church.

This was a year after this was written. In fact, four years after this was written, Peter himself would be crucified and martyred upside down. This was about to happen for the church. And it's almost like, when you read this book, it's almost like God knew what was coming for His church. Because when you read what is written here, it's like, man, this is the perfect message for the church at the time. Because Peter is about to say, "Hey, if you're going to choose to follow Jesus in this life, this life is going to be really, really hard. You're going to be pushed aside. You're going to go through suffering. This life is going to be difficult, but if you're a follower of Jesus your goal is not a comfortable life, but a faithful life. Because we know that we have an eternal life with God later." And really, what God is going to say here is the sufferings that you experience now are actually for your benefit because they're strengthening your faith. This is why we've called this sermon series Forged.

As you saw with that opening video; a blacksmith can only form and shape iron once it's under tremendous heat. In the same way, God does his best work with us when we're under tremendous heat; when we're undergoing tremendous suffering - that's when He most shapes us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus. Here's why we want to teach 1 Peter to our church at this time. Maybe you've realized this, but things don't seem to be getting any easier for the church in America. It seems harder to follow Jesus today than it did five years ago. It seems even harder today than it did 10 years ago. And it just seems like the trend isn't really our friend. For a lot of us, this is alarming to us. We're scared. We're anxious. We're nervous. We're rattled by it and we're kind of surprised by it. I just want to make this clear - that that is like signing up to be in the Navy Seals and being surprised they won't let you sleep in. Hard comes with the territory. This is what you're signing up for as a follower of Jesus. You're signing up for difficult. So, when things get harder and harder and harder, we don't need to be surprised; we could be like this is what God said it would be for us as the church. So, we want to talk about 1 Peter today because things are getting more and more difficult. And as the world continues to drift further and further away from Jesus, we as a church want to double down on our commitment to Jesus.

And as we start this passage and this book, this is really where Peter is going to begin. He's going to say, "Hey, this world is going to be really, really hard to live well. So, if you want to live really well in the world, you first need to know who you are in Christ. To put it another way, you need to know who you are before God so that you can live well before man. So, what Peter's going to do, he's going to open up this book by telling the people who they are. That's what we're going to see in verse one. So, if you have your Bibles, open them up to 1 Peter 1:1, this is what he says, **"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,"** Now, he's almost primarily writing to Gentiles. All of those places would be condensed to what we now know as modern day Turkey. Now look at verse 2, I don't know of another verse in Scripture that more accurately and completely describes the Trinity. Peter says: **"² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:"** I love that last part. The combination of those two things. We are saved by the blood of Jesus to be obedient to the commands of Jesus. And then he says: **Grace and peace be yours in abundance.**

From what I read there; I see three different names that Peter is saying that God has given us. You might want to underline them and two of them are really similar and the other one is

incredibly different. The first two names are elect and chosen. Elect and chosen. This is important for us to understand. If you are a follower of Jesus, it is not a burden for God to be with you. He's not bummed out to spend time with you. He's not put out whenever He's with you because you are elected by Him; you are chosen by Him. God so loves you that he picked you out of a crowd to be with Him forever and ever. So those are two of those words, you're elect and you're chosen.

But then there's another word there. There is another descriptor for who we are and it's very different – it is the word exile. And what's interesting is Peter combines those two words at the beginning, underline it / circle it. This is important, he says, 'to God's elect exiles.' This is the first thing that we can understand in this passage.

1. In Jesus we are elect exiles.

These two things, they're really in conflict with one another, You see, we are chosen by God and exiled by the world. Another translation for that word exile, is foreigner or stranger. So what Peter is doing is describing that feeling.

If you've ever taken a plane overseas, you fly somewhere really, really far away and you get off the plane and then you are just immediately hit with a whole lot of different. People who speak a different language; people who eat different food; people who drive on the other side of the road; and it's just really, really overwhelming. You feel lost because you're in a different country. Or to put it another way, what he's describing here is the feeling that I would feel if you told me to go and play cricket right now. If you were like, "Hey Nate, there's a game of cricket being played right out there. You got to go play right now." I'd be completely lost. I don't know the rules of cricket. I don't know how to score points in cricket, maybe they score goals in cricket. I don't know. I wouldn't know where to run. I don't even know if you run in cricket. I'd be completely lost! This is what Peter is saying. He's saying while you're in this world, you should feel totally lost here. It should feel totally foreign to you. And it's not just Peter that says this, Paul says this in Philippians 3:20. He says that our citizenship is in heaven. It should feel like we're in a different country. While we're here it's going to feel like we don't know the rules. It's going to feel like we don't know the language and you're going to look at people and you go, 'I don't even know where they're trying to go'. And this is what it's like for us as a follower of Jesus. If you're a believer in Jesus, if you are an elect exile, you should be confused by how the world lives.

If you aren't there should be a red flag that goes up for you. Because if you are an elect exile, you should be so confused with how the world views alcohol. You should see what they drink and how often they drink and how much they drink, and you shouldn't be like, "You know what? I was going to do the same thing." It should feel totally foreign. Because if you're an elect exile, you should be so confused with how the world views sex and gender and sexuality. You should look at what the world believes and go 'Man, it feels like I'm living on a different country.' Or if you are an elect exile, you should look at the way the world spends their money and just be confused. Or if you're an elect exile, you should be confused with how much people spend investing their whole life into their career. Or if you're an elect exile, you should be confused with the entertainment that people take in or the entertainment that people allow their kids to take it. If you're an elect exile, you should be confused with how much emphasis people put on sports,

because if you're an elect exile, you should be confused by the ways of this world. And if you aren't, I don't know? Maybe you're not an elect exile.

Because if you were to be in an exile here on this earth, what it should feel like is you should look around at our culture and go “Man, it feels like I'm living on a different planet; it feels like I am in a different country. I don't understand the rules here.” It's like we're living by two different sets of rules. It's like we're taking two different orders - because we are. Here's what you got to understand. The world is taking orders from the Prince of Darkness. We're taking our orders from the King of Kings. No wonder we don't feel like we belong here.

The problem though, for the American church and the problem for me, is that I really want to belong and be accepted by God. And I really want to belong and be accepted by the world. Scripture makes it clear that you can't - you got to pick. It's not just Peter that says this. James says this in chapter 4:4. **You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.** You see, you're either going to feel at home in the world or you're going to feel at home with God. You have to choose.

I know, for so many of us, this is like our worst nightmare to feel like exiles from the world; to not fit in from the people around us. I know for so many of you here today, your freshman at Baylor, I know what you're thinking because I was there. One of the thoughts that is going through your mind, if not the primary thought going through your mind right now is, am I going to find friends here? Your worst nightmare is that this next weekend you'll just be totally alone in your dorm room while everyone else is out having fun. Your nightmare is that you feel like you don't belong. Some of you, as parents, your nightmare is that your kids would not feel like they belong at school. I just want to let you know that if you're signing up to follow Jesus that's kind of what you're signing up for. You're signing up to not fit in. You're signing up to be an exile. And as an exile here, you're not going to get what everyone else gets. As an exile here, sometimes you'll miss out on the promotion. As an exile here, sometimes you won't be able to date that person. As an exile here, sometimes you won't be able to watch that movie. And as an exile here, sometimes living this life is going to feel really, really hard. And when it feels really, really hard, it doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. It means you're following Jesus because we are the elect exiles here and this world is not our home, so we shouldn't feel like we fit in. Point number one, the first thing we can learn here, is that in Jesus we are elect exiles.

So that's our name, so what does it mean? Let's take a look at verse 3:³ **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,**

Ok, so why does your name matter? Why does your name matter? Imagine if my name was Nate Bezos. Or Nate Zuckerberg. Or Nate Musk. What would you be able to conclude about me? Would you be able to conclude that I have access to what my dad has? You'd be able to conclude that at some point in my life I would have access to an absolutely massive inheritance. In the same way, in verse three, it says that we have a new birth into a living hope. Really, we've been reborn into a brand-new family. We've been given a brand-new name. My name is now Nate

Hilgenkamp, Child of God. And if that's true, what can you conclude about me? That I have access to everything my dad has. And that's point #2. The second thing we can learn from this passage:

2. *In Jesus we are given an imperishable inheritance.*

As an elect exile, this is what's true of your life now. But let's talk about this for a minute. Do any of you remember NFTs? Yeah, they're a really big deal during COVID when we were all bored at home. And if you don't know what an NFT is, here's the very basic definition. An NFT is something that you have to pay for and it's just like a screenshot of the Internet. I know for you Crypto Bros and NFT people it's more than that. But it's really not. It's just like paying to have a screenshot of the Internet that you can own. Here is an example of one. (Picture on screen.) This is a screenshot that I took on Google images of the NFT of the picture of the first ever tweet from Jack who is the founder of Twitter. It went up for sale in 2021 and it was sold via auction for \$2.9 million. Keep in mind, I just took that screenshot for free. Then recently the owner of this put it up for sale, he bought it for \$2.9 million and he put it up for sale with the bidding starting at \$48 million. Once the auction was over, the highest bid that that he received was \$280 dollars. Not \$280 million, \$280. What did he do? He threw \$3 million into a depreciating asset the minute he bought this thing. It became worthless almost overnight. You see that investment perished, spoiled, and faded. It's worthless now. It essentially has no purpose at all. You can't do anything with it. And what Scripture is saying is when you pour your life into this world, when you invest all that you have into this world, this is what it's like. The world's going to make you go bankrupt.

You see your career it's going to leave you empty. If you invest your life into that boyfriend, he's going to leave you empty. If you invest your life in your kid's sports team, it's going to leave you empty. Now on the other hand, if you invest your life in Jesus Christ what He says is you have an inheritance that can neither perish, spoil, or fade. It is kept in heaven for you. And you know what it is? It's everything that your Heavenly Father owns, which is a lot. And here's the good news, nothing can change it. The economy can't touch it. Your performance can't touch it - because God's holding it in His hands. So, one day you're going to go home to heaven and it's going to be there for you. And that's good news! I mean what a stress relief for us. It should change our life. And yet, many times it doesn't. Maybe it doesn't because you don't believe Him. I know for the vast majority of people here today, watching online, in the lobby and here, I know the vast majority of people here today would say that you are a Christian. Look at verse 3: It says that the Christian is the one who has been given a new birth. You must be totally reborn. You are not an updated version of the old you. You are an alive version of the dead you. You have been given a new birth into a living hope. Now here is where we need to wake up. For many of us who claim to be believers of Jesus, for many of us, we've been lulled to sleep thinking that we're Christians - meanwhile, we've placed all of our hope into dying things. You see your hope, the thing you daydream about, the thing you'll be crushed if it doesn't take place; your hope is that this year would be the year you get into a relationship... Or your hope, the thing you care most about is that one day you'll be able to move into that neighborhood... Or your hope, the thing you're dreaming about, that one day you'll be an executive in your company... Or your hope, the thing you're working so hard for is that one day you'll do enough to impress your dad so that he will finally say he's proud of you... Or your hope, the thing you care most about is that you one

day have a certain social status or a certain social media following... Friends, if that's you, you have a dying hope. It's going to leave you empty.

Here's the problem. We cannot live this life just for this life. Because when we spend all of our life focused on this life, it makes it look like we don't belong to the next life. And this is what Peter is saying here. He's saying if you live for this life, it's going to leave you empty. On the other hand, the Christian is the one who has not a dying hope but a living hope. What does that mean? It means we place our hope in something that is alive and cannot die. What would that be? Well verse three says that we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That means that Christians have placed all of their hope and trust and faith in the fact that God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son to live a perfect life that we never could and to die the death that we deserve Then three days later, He rose from the dead so that death could no longer have mastery over Him and no longer have mastery over us. And when we believe that, God doesn't just raise his son from the dead, but He gives us new life also. We are reborn into a new family with a new name. When we have a new name, that means that our name declares that we have access to everything that our father has. And that's what Peter is saying here in this passage. He's saying, "Friends, this life is going to be hard here but just remember, it's going to be really good there. You might be punished here. You will be cherished there. You might be cut down here, you'll be comforted there. You might be poor here; you'll be rich there. Because while we are elect exiles here on this earth, one day we're going to be the elect citizens of heaven. Friends, that's good news! And the second thing we can learn from this passage is point #2 - in Jesus we have an imperishable inheritance.

I want to finish up this passage by reading the second half of verse 4 again and then we'll read verse five. It says this: **This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.** This is one of the most important things we need to understand this morning. We make it to salvation, we make it to that last day, not because of our good works; not because of our sheer resilience. Look at verse five. We make it to the coming of our salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. How? What does it say? How? **By the shielding of God's power.**

3. In Jesus we are shielded by God's power.

I think this is what it looks like. This this summer my wife and my daughter and I got the chance to go to Branson, MO. We got to spend a week at Kanakuk camp, and we just had a great time there. And as a part of our time there we got to go on a pontoon ride on a lake called Lake Taneycomo. Here' a picture of what it looks like. (Picture on screen.) I am sorry for the close up, I didn't mean for that to happen, but that's ok. So, this is Lake Taneycomo and you can see in this picture that there's like fog coming off the water. That's because it's like 95 degrees outside, but this lake is like always nearly freezing. It's like 40 something degrees. It's because Lake Taneycomo takes the water from the bottom of another lake – the Table Rock Lake. So, it doesn't matter how hot it is outside the this lake is always so freezing cold.

So, we're on this boat ride having a blast, and as you're on the boat the wind is actually really cold because even though it's really hot outside, the lake is really cold. It's brushing up against the lake and it's making everything cold, which is fine for us - not great for a 2-year-old. So

we've been out on the boat for a long time and eventually like a flip just switched and she starts losing her mind. She is like, "I want to get off the boat! Get me off the boat. Dad, the winds too cold. Get me off the boat!" Now she's doing this and we're like, we want to get off the boat too, believe us. But we couldn't because we were really, really, really far away from where we had docked the boat. So, we asked her to turn around and as she is screaming and wailing and throwing herself all over the place, I just pick her up in that moment and I put my back to the wind and hold her like this and I just go, "Jaycee, we're almost home. We're going to make it. Dad's going to keep you safe." I'm just doing everything I possibly can to shield her from the wind and I just go, "Jaycee, we're almost home. We're headed there now. Dad is going to keep you safe. Jaycee, we're almost there. We're going to make it. Dad's going to keep you safe."

I don't know what you've been through in your life. I bet that you've been through some really hard things. I have too. I could give you a lot of examples. An example of that is about a year ago, my wife and I went through a miscarriage, and it was really, really hard. It felt like the winds of this world were just flying in our face and that's what we felt. You know what else we felt? In that time, I just felt like my Heavenly Father picked me up, put His back towards the wind and said, "We're going home. We're going to make it. Dad's going to keep you safe. Nate, we're going home. Dad's going to keep you safe." I bet the things that you've been through in your life, if you're a follower of Jesus, I bet you felt that same thing. Where Dad picked you up, shielded you from the wind and said, "You're going home. You are going to make it. Dad's going to keep you safe." And just like my daughter, I wasn't able to protect her from all the wind. She still felt some of the effects of it, but I kept her from most of the effects of the wind. It doesn't mean that she didn't feel any pain, but it did mean she felt my presence and she knew she was going to make it because I was there.

This is what Peter is saying that we as followers of Jesus can experience. You see in this life... sometimes life will just beat you down so much. I don't know if you have ever been there, but I've been beat down so much that I am exhausted. And sometimes I'm like, "God, I don't know if I have what it takes to make it to the end of my life still following Jesus." Here's the good news - you don't make it to the end of your life by your own strength, but by His shielding. Because look again at this passage. The words in this passage are saying your salvation is not dependent upon you; your sanctification is not dependent upon you; your steadiness is not dependent upon you. Look again in verse one, this is not dependent upon you. It says **to God's elect, who've been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.** Skipping ahead. **In His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...** And then skipping ahead. **This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power.**

You see everything there is describing God's preeminence and not your performance. And this is the joy of following Jesus. Your definition, your name, your title is not because you've earned it. You see, in Jesus Christ, you are not defined by what you've done. In Jesus Christ, you are not defined by your net worth. In Jesus Christ, you're not defined by your job title. In Jesus Christ, you're not defined by your physical appearance. In Jesus Christ, you're not defined by your GPA. In Jesus Christ, you're not defined by your sorority or fraternity. In Jesus Christ, you're not defined by what that coach said about you. In Jesus Christ, you're not defined by what that parent said to you. In Jesus Christ, you're not defined by what that ex-boyfriend said about you. In Jesus

Christ, you surely are not defined by what that sin said about you, because in Jesus Christ you are who your Father says you are. If He's declared that to be true of you, then that's who you are. That's the good thing about following Jesus - your name, your title, your ending is not because of your own strength, but because of His shielding. It's not based on your performance; it's based on His preeminence.

In summary, this is what we can learn from this passage. In Jesus we are elect exiles. Point #2. In Jesus we have an imperishable inheritance. Point #3 in Jesus we are shielded by God's power.

Well, you know, I opened with that story of me being renamed by that kid at Chick-fil-a. You may know this, you may not know this, but Peter wasn't actually Peter's birth name. He was given a different name. His parents named him Simon, and eventually Jesus called him to be one of his disciples. Then overtime, over the course of his ministry, Jesus pulled Simon aside and he said, Simon, son of Jonah, your name will now be Peter, which means rock. And on this rock, I will build my church. Maybe you know this about Peter, as time would go on Jesus would be arrested by the Roman authorities. That He'd be crucified. Right before Jesus was crucified do you know what Peter did? He denied him three times so that he could be accepted by this world. And maybe you know this, but Jesus resurrected from the dead and one of the first things he did is he went and found Peter so he could restore him.

I've read this passage 1,000 times and when I read it this week, I wasn't really expecting what I was going to read. Because I was surprised at the word that Jesus used to restore Peter. You know what he said? He said, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" And Peter said, "Lord, you know I love you." Once again Jesus said, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" And Peter said, "You know I love you Lord." And the third time, Jesus said, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" Peter said, "You know I love you." That moment would have been piercing for Peter, that name would have been piercing for Peter. Why? Because Jesus used his old name, his worldly name. And if I were to guess, I would guess that Jesus said that name with a purpose. I think he's saying, "Simon, you've been living like Simon. Simon, you've been living like the world. You've been living like the name the world has given you. But Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me? Because if you love me, that's not your name. Your name is Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church. So, Simon, who are you going to be? Are you going to be Simon – the name the world has given you or are you going to be Peter, the name I have given you?"

Do you know what happened next? The rest of the Gospels and the rest of the book of Acts he goes by Peter and lives like Peter. He made a choice. I think today, Jesus is coming to all of us. He is asking, "Who you going to be? Who are you going to be? What name are you going to live by? Are you going to keep carrying along that name you've been carrying along for years? Names like Forgettable. Unwanted. Unlikable. Unaccepted. Untalented. Liar. Cheater. Addicted to lust. Addicted to alcohol. Addicted to your own pride. Is that the name you're going to go by? Or are you going to go by the name the one who defeated death gave to you? Are you going to go by the name Chosen. Elected. Accepted. Redeemed. Forgiven. Friends, who you're going to be? Maybe the better question this morning is who are you going to listen to?"

Let me pray that it would be Jesus.

Father, I admit that oftentimes when I read scripture and see the names that you have spoken over us, I don't feel like they're true of my life. I don't feel like I deserve the names that you have given in Scripture. I don't feel like I deserve to be chosen, or elected, or saved, or forgiven, or loved. I've got too much sin for that. I feel like I'm too far gone for that. But God, thank you so much that my feelings don't define reality. Your Word defines reality, and I am, and we are who you say we are. God, right now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, I pray that you would start to break some bondage. That you would begin to change some names, or at least allow us to realize the names that you have shifted us to. That we would no longer go by the names that a sin has given us that we no longer go by the names that a person has given us, but instead we go by the name that you have given us. That in this world we are the elect exiles. God. I pray that we feel really at home with that name. So that when we don't feel at home with this world, we realize that it's ok because one day we're going to go home and be with Jesus. We have an imperishable inheritance waiting on us. So, Father, I just pray that you would give us courage as a church. That as we walk into a world that more and more drifts away from you, that we would be a people who would double down on our commitment to you. And that we would stand firm acknowledging you with everything that we say, do, and think. Because we know that this world is not our home, but one day we will be home because we know that Jesus is alive and with us and for us. And it's in His name that we pray. Amen.