

Strange World Good God-1

“Blessed in the Stress”

1 Peter 1:1-12 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a second to welcome all of our first time guests and those watching with us online!

I'm super excited because it's summer and that means that we slow things down a bit and go verse by verse through a book of the Bible!

As we like to say around here, if you need a word from God, pick up the Word of God! It's not just a timeless book...it's a timely book...

It speaks into our lives today, and I believe that God is going to speak to you through His word today!

So we'll be in the book of 1 Peter for the whole summer...

And it's just jam packed with timeless truths so as you're turning there let me give you a quick overview...

For all of our teen's and twenty somethings...Peter is writing what's called a letter...

Back in the old days we used to get a pen and paper out and write our thoughts out on paper, sign it, seal it, and send it through the mail!

How many of you had a pen-pal? My family moved when I was 12 years old...and my friends and I would write letters to each other...

Technology is great, I love it...but I think it would be nice to get back to hand written notes...

I can't tell you how many little notes of encouragement I've gotten over the years...it hits differently than a text...

Peter is writing a letter about 30 years or so after the resurrection of Jesus... to encourage the church because they're living in a strange world...It's a world that was ruled by the Roman Empire...

Rome rules the world with an iron fist. It had the best military...it had the best economy...to be a Roman Citizen meant that you had benefits that were not available to you otherwise...

But it was also a pagan nation...it was a nation that was far away from God...It didn't want anything to do with God, with His values, or with His people...And in the middle of this complex world...you had this new movement that was spreading throughout it called The Way...

These followers of the God-Man Jesus Christ...who later became known as Christians...

What was happening was the Church was trying to follow the Jesus way and the world around them hated them for it...

So much so that they started to become hostile towards the church...and they started persecuting God's people...And God's people were suffering, and even dying because they were following Jesus.

The same things are happening all over our world today...today somewhere in the world someone is being persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

This brings up some good questions...
How do we live as followers of Jesus in this world? Why as Christians, do we suffer?

That's why Peter is writing this letter...he wants to encourage the church...to encourage means to put courage into someone...and I believe that's what the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God want to do in our hearts through this series...

Today if you're feeling the tension of loving God and putting Him first, while living in this strange world...

if you're going through a battle because of your faith...if your relationships with others who are far away from God have you feeling stressed...

I want to remind you that although we're living in a strange world, we serve a good God...you may not realize this, but there's a "blessing" to be found in all of that "stressing" that you're going through!

1 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.

Peter kicks off his letter to the church who is scattered throughout what is modern day Turkey...and he's answering two fundamental questions...

Who is God? & Who are we? Until we understand these two questions our life really doesn't make sense...But once we have an understanding of who God is, and who we are now we can understand why we're here...

What our purpose is, and how we can make a difference in this life for God's glory.

Who is God?

Peter tells us that God is Father, Son, & Spirit...This is the distinct teaching of the church throughout church history called the doctrine of the Trinity.

One God eternally existing in three distinct Persons in perfect unity...

It's not three "gods" or three parts of or expressions of God...but three Persons so completely united that they form the One true and eternal God!

This is a fundamental teaching of our faith...other religions don't believe this...the cults like the JW's and the Mormons don't believe this...

It's a concept that's not easy for our brains to understand...but just because something is difficult to understand doesn't mean it's not true...I've heard people say the word trinity isn't in the Bible so it can't be true...

Umm the word Bible isn't in the Bible either but that doesn't mean that we don't have a Bible! So Peter tells us who God is...Then he tells us who we are...

Who are we?

We live in a world where people find their identity in their race, their gender, their sexual preference, their job, their city, their country...

God wants us to find our identity in Him...Remember, Peter is writing to the Church...he's writing to Christians and he uses two words to describe who we are...

Elect & Exile

Elect means chosen...You may be here today and you're thinking I've never been chosen for anything...

When I was in middle school, I wasn't the strongest or the fastest or the most popular...

And so in gym class, it was always the captain of the football team or basketball team that was picking teams to play kickball...

And they would pick their friends first...So I know what it feels like to be overlooked and underestimated because you know...I had some skills...

So if you're thinking that you never get picked for anything...you know who picked you to be on His team? God did! If you're a Christian, it means that you have been chosen by God!

Now before you get too puffed up...Like I'm so awesome of course God wants me...You haven't been chosen because you're good...you've been chosen because God is good!

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:

Our election is based on God's foreknowledge...In other words you were chosen by God, because God knew that you would choose Him!

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

In love 5 he[b] predestined us for adoption to sonship[c] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—Ephesians 1:3-5 (NIV)

So did God choose me or did I choose God?
The answer is Yes! Both are true!

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon used to say *“It’s a good thing God picked me before I was born, he never would have picked me afterwards.”*

People get really confused and actually argue about election or predestination...and free will...but honestly it’s not either or it’s both and...

Skip Heitzig explains it like this...

A man is drowning, a rope is thrown out to him. That rope alone cannot save that man. The man has to grab the rope or he will drown.

But just grabbing the rope isn't enough, there has to be somebody on the shore throwing the rope out and pulling the rope back in...

God by election throws the rope out and pulls it back in; we by our free will, grab a hold of the rope. God always makes the first move. He always chooses us...He always takes the initiative...and we choose to respond.

Remember what John said?

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.-1 John 4:7-10 (NIV)

So if you're a Christian you've been chosen...
you're God's elect...Yeah! That's awesome

But he also calls you an exile...Oh no that
doesn't sound good! An exile is a stranger...a
pilgrim...someone who's living in someone
else's territory...

A world that lives by a different set of values...A
world that plays by a different set of rules...

Every follower of Jesus lives in this
tension...I'm chosen by God, but live as a
stranger in the world...

...some tension...some frustration...some
disappointment...some suffering...why?

Because this world is not my home! This world
is broken and it needs to be fixed...

This world is sick and it needs to be healed...This world is lost and it needs to be found...

This world is going to get continually worse until Jesus puts everything back together again!
Until that day...we are exiles living in a strange world...and the longer we walk with Jesus the more we realize this is not our home!

Here's where we feel the stress, and the pull...
We're chosen but we're exiles...

God chooses you...the world rejects you
God blesses you...the world stresses you
This is the reality of being a child of God!

What Peter is saying is that while we are living in this strange world...and until God takes us home...we need to be covered by Jesus' blood
Jesus rose from the dead for you...

The answer to the problems we'll face is Jesus

The hope we have while we're here is Jesus
The joy we have is in Jesus
The peace we have is in Jesus
The purpose we have is in Jesus
Everything is by Jesus and for Jesus!

In order for that to happen we need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit...The Holy Spirit is working in us, making us more like Jesus...making us holy...sanctifying us...helping us live a life that is obedient to God!

Peter tells us that when we live Spirit-filled, Spirit-led lives we are given grace and peace...

Grace is God's unmerited favor and supernatural empowerment...We're saved by God's grace through faith...we didn't earn it, we don't deserve it...it's a free gift...It's the gift that keeps on giving because we're not just saved by His grace, we're also kept by His grace...

Grace isn't a license to do what we please but power to do what we should!

How many of you have faced something in your life and you thought you would never get through it? It was God sustaining you by His grace!

Peace means I have peace with God, (I'm saved) so I get to experience the peace of God...The world doesn't have peace...because the world doesn't know God...Peace comes from God!

Jesus is the Prince of Peace...

His peace surpasses all understanding

His peace guards our heart and mind as we're navigating through this strange world...

What a beautiful gift we're given in Christ!

Now if there's anyone who knows and understands the grace and peace of God it's Peter! If there's anyone who knows that you don't have to have your life altogether to be loved by God and used by God...it's Peter!

Peter's life was like a yo yo...

Peter's life was like that Katy Perry song Hot n Cold...

*"You're hot then you're cold
You're yes then you're no
You're in then you're out
You're up then you're down"*

On Peter's good days He is saying things that are truly inspired by God...on His bad days he's saying things that make you go "wow Peter really?"

In Matthew 16 Jesus asks his disciples "Hey who are people saying that I am?"

And the disciples are like John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah...Then Jesus says what about you, who do you say that I am?

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."-Matthew 16:16 (NIV)

Jesus is like yeah Peter! Good job! You didn't figure that out on your own...but My Father in Heaven just revealed that to you!

And then a just a few minutes later, Peter starts rebuking Jesus...Hello He's scolding Jesus because he didn't like what Jesus said...

What did Jesus say? He told His disciples that He has to go to the cross and die for our sins...and Peter is like no way!

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me;

you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”-Matthew 16:23 (NIV)

We see Peter walking in faith...he walks on water...we see Peter walking in fear...denies that he even knows Jesus...

We can all relate to Peter...because in a lot of ways we're like him...we take one step forward in our walk, we take two steps back...We have days where we're walking on water...We have days where we're sinking...

If there's hope for Peter there's hope for me and you...if there's grace and peace in abundance for Peter, there's grace and peace in abundance for me and you...

This was super encouraging to the church living as strangers and stressed in the 1st century...

This is super encouraging to the church living as strangers and stressed in the twenty-first century!

Now Peter is going to continue telling us that we're blessed in the stress...Remember he's writing to Christians who are going through all kinds of trials and hardships...Christians who are not only being persecuted...they're being used as human torches in Cesar Nero's garden...

How do you encourage people who are going through these things? You remind them that this world is not the end...you remind them of what they have to look forward too...you give them the hope that we have as Christians...

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. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

Why can we rejoice?

God has given us His **Great Mercy**

Grace was getting what we don't deserve...but Mercy is not getting what we do deserve.

The bottom line is this...God loves us and as a result He shows kindness to us, He sympathizes with us and has compassion for us...

Jesus knows what it's like to live in this strange world...

Jesus understands all of the stresses of this life and He's overcome them! He has the victory... He's seated at the right hand of the Father and He's interceding for us right now!

If you're here today and you think "There's no way that God is going to forgive me...I've messed up too much for too long... I've used up all of my chances...He's gotta be done with me..."

Wrong! There is mercy for you! It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done...if you turn to and trust in Jesus Christ there is great mercy for you!

God has given us **NEW BIRTH**

We are born physically but we're spiritually dead because of sin. Religion, being a good person, those things cannot save you. This is why Jesus tells a religious man named Nicodemus

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again-John 3:3 (NIV)

I can't tell you how many times I've invited people to church and they were like...you guys aren't those born-again type of Christians are you? Newsflash...That's the only kind of Christian there is!

When we repent of our sin and turn to Jesus, we become born-again...the Holy Spirit comes and lives inside of us and changes our nature from the inside out!

You know it's happening because you want to do things that you never wanted to do before...You have a hunger for God that you never had before...you have a desire to care about the things that God cares about...you want to be nice to people you never wanted to be nice to before! You're made new!

God has given us a **LIVING HOPE**

This world needs hope...

Do you know what the trials and pains of this world...the stresses of this world...do you know what they do? They expose what we're placing our hope in...

People place their hope in their job, in their money, in their retirement, in a politician, in a political party, in the government...

What happens? You lose your job...you lose your hope...Economy tanks, inflation goes up, 401k goes down...you're living on ramen noodles and Ritz crackers...you lose your hope...

You take a stand for Christ...Live by His Word...You'll lose family...you'll lose popularity...

You'll lose friends...you'll get canceled...you may get called narrow minded, bigoted, hateful, racist, fascist, or intolerant depending on the day...and you may even lose your life...but you will never lose your hope!

Because our hope isn't in this world...Our hope is a hope that cannot be taken away...it's a hope that cannot be silenced or censored...it's a living hope because we serve a Living Savior!

This living hope isn't just for some day...it's for right now...it's what's going to get you through the rest of this day no matter what comes your way! It's a living hope because it helps you live!

And Peter tells us that it actually proves that we belong to Christ...

7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—

How many people have you seen walk away from Jesus after a trial? Just use the pandemic as an example...

People who used to walk with God...stopped living out their faith...stopped corporate worship...stopped giving...stopped serving...

But they didn't stop living...Still going to work...still going to the gym...still going to parties...just stopped living out their faith...That trial exposed the genuineness of their faith...

But those who go through that trial holding on to your faith...

7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

As we close today, you may be going through a trial...let the words of Peter encourage you today...

You can rejoice because you are a child of God...you have been chosen by God the Father...Saved by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ and Sanctified and Empowered by the Holy Spirit...

You can rejoice because these trials, although painful, serve as a test...they allow us to see that our faith is genuine...and nothing is wasted...God uses it all...

Like gold is refined in the fire...God is refining us through these trials...the trials reveal the places where we're not trusting God...So we have an opportunity to exercise our faith...

You can rejoice because this world isn't our home...One day we will see Jesus face to face...No more pain...no more tears...no more sin...no more suffering...It's a strange world but we serve a Good God!

Be encouraged today...Our God is going to work it all out...and we have a reason to rejoice!

What's the Holy Spirit Saying To You?

