

## **Title: Stable in an Unstable World: Finding Your Identity in Christ**

Sermon Summary: This sermon launches a series on maintaining spiritual stability in an increasingly unstable world. The pastor emphasizes that true stability comes not from managing life better or becoming emotionally tougher, but from understanding our identity in Christ. Drawing from 1 Peter 1:1-2, the message establishes that before Christians face any trials, persecution, or suffering, God has already defined who they are through four foundational truths: they are chosen by God, called to be different as aliens in this world, uniquely sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and given clear direction and purpose to obey Christ. The sermon stresses that identity must come before endurance—we cannot stand firm in difficult times unless we know who we are in Christ. This identity is not based on feelings, others' opinions, past successes or failures, but solely on what God declares to be true about believers. The pastor warns that suffering is inevitable for Christians, whether through persecution, physical ailments, or rejection, but encourages believers that grace and peace can be theirs in fullest measure when they root their lives in these four identity realities rather than in shifting circumstances.

### Key Points:

Stability in an unstable world begins with knowing who you are in Christ, not in managing life better or becoming tougher

Identity comes before endurance; identity in Christ creates endurance

Christians are "elect" (chosen by God) and "exiles" (aliens in this world whose true home is heaven)

God's choosing involves foreknowledge—He set His knowing upon believers with the intent to love them

Four foundational identity truths: Chosen by God, Called to be Different, Uniquely Sanctified, and Given Direction/Purpose

Being chosen means you fully belong to God and will never fully belong in this world

Christians are called to stand out and be different from the world in lifestyle, language, and choices

The Holy Spirit's sanctifying work sets believers apart for God and uniquely shapes each person with specific gifts

Believers' primary purpose and direction is to obey Jesus Christ and honor God, regardless of their earthly occupation

Grace and peace in fullest measure are possible when life is built on these four identity realities

Suffering will come to all Christians, but the foundation determines whether we stand or fall

The worst suffering sometimes comes from other Christians who attack and malign rather than support

Scripture Reference:

1 Peter 1:1-2 (primary focus)

Genesis 1 (created in God's image)

Isaiah 43 (known and called by God)

Matthew 22 (called to love God and neighbor)

Romans 6 (died and raised with Christ)

Colossians 3 (life hidden with Christ in God)

Romans 3 (none seek after God)

Ephesians 2 (chosen before the foundation of the world)

Titus 3:1-7 (regenerative and renewing work of the Spirit)

Stories:

The pastor's personal testimony of physical suffering over the past five years, including melanoma surgery, back surgery, and ongoing health challenges

Meeting a friend from South Philadelphia at church and recognizing him as someone who endured difficult circumstances

The pastor's experience meeting his lifelong friend during grad school orientation in Indiana—a hillbilly from West Virginia connecting with someone from outside Chicago

Moving to Southern California in the late 80s/early 90s and standing out with a West Virginia accent among people speaking differently

Living in various places (California, Washington D.C., South Carolina, near Chicago, Alaska, Cuba/Gitmo Bay) as an example of being an exile

Meeting someone named Mark while out of town and the conversation with his wife Terry about treating him as someone chosen by God

Jesus's parable of the two houses—one built on sand, one built on rock—both facing the same storms but with different outcomes based on their foundation

The account of Paul, Peter, James, and John singing hymns while chained in prison, fed like hogs, yet rejoicing in their suffering