

Protect Your Identity
1 Peter 1:1-7
September 18, 2011

Intro Amy will share about having her email and Facebook identity hacked.

Read 1 Peter 1:1-7

Peter was writing to the church reminding them there was certain way they should see who they are in the world, and not let the wrong influences or the painful experiences of this world steal their God-given identity from them.

Identity Confirmed: Exiles

The reason I say that is because the very first thing Peter calls the Christians that he is writing to are “**exiles.**” They are spiritual visitors in the land they are living in even though that was their homeland, their country of natural origin. Spiritually speaking Peter is reminding them that becoming a follower of Jesus gave them a new identity and an identity to protect. In chapter 2 of this book, Peter tells them they are God’s chosen people, and once again he calls them exiles and even aliens. I think it is clear to say that Peter wanted the church to know there is a different identity and image that Christians live by than the rest of the world. We are to guard against anything that could cause us to water down that clarity of who we are and the life God calls us to live.

Illustration, Flexitarians:

I was reading the other day about a new group of vegetarians. They are vegetarians who say they will also eat some meat they really enjoy. This new group of vegetarians are making the traditional vegetarian groups angry. The traditional group is saying what is the point of calling your self a vegetarian if you are going

compromise and eat meat? So the new group of vegetarian's have found a way around the criticism. They are now calling themselves flexi-tarians. They eat vegetables; but when they have the flexibility that when they are hungry for a hot juicy steak or hamburger, they can also eat meat. (p.147 I'm Not a Fan)

Peter wanted Christians to know they are called to be more than spiritual "flexi-tarians." In these first seven verses, he reminds Christians how they can protect their Christian identity.

Context for the encouragement

There was a reason Peter had to write Christians because by the time Peter was writing, the first century world was not the friendliest for Christians. There could be blatant hostility and temptations for those who were followers of Jesus. Not to far in the future from the time Peter wrote his letter, there would be severe persecution of the Church. By the year 64, Roman Emperor Nero would accuse the Christians of having started the famous fire of Rome. Nero would order that Christians be sown up in the hides of animals and then dogs would be released upon them and attack and kill the Christians. Nero would order Christians to be rolled alive in tar-pitch and tied to stakes, set on fire and be used as human torches. (Barclay Commentary, 1 Peter) On top of all this, these Christians were living in the world of Rome and morals of purity were grossly lacking.

There would be need for the Church to have encouragement to stand up under such trials and temptation, and Peter who had gone through persecution himself wrote to them. He reminded them of what the resurrection of Jesus means. His reminder was to help them protect their identity as disciples of Jesus Christ so that neither persecution nor the tempting pleasures of the world need steal the presence of God from them.

Peter knew they needed to keep a clear picture of who they were

because their faith was being tested. In verses 6-7 Peter used the image of raw gold being heated in fires to get to the pure grade gold. You may be here this morning and you might not even want to admit it, but something is testing and trying your faith. It happens to all of us. We all question God and hit times when life circumstances both within us and outside of us can seem to dry out our souls, confuse the focus of our faith in Christ, turn our priorities upside down.

Pastor Kyle Idlemann tells about a young man in his church that he and others in his church mentored and the guy really turned his life around. One day the young man asked if Kyle would have lunch with he and his mother. Kyle agreed and as they first sat at lunch together he thought the young man's mother was going to thank him and the church for being a positive influence on her son. Instead she asked Kyle to please tell her son the Bible teaches "everything in moderation and it doesn't have to be all or nothing," and he didn't have to spend so much time at the church. Pastor Kyle said to this woman who had been in church most of her life, the Bible doesn't say everything in moderation in fact Revelation 3:16 states because some are neither hot nor cold God will spew them out his mouth, meaning following Jesus is all or nothing that is our identity. (I Am Not a Fan, Idleman p.111)

the 110-111 the angry mother "everything in moderation"

Identity Protectors

So in these 7 verses, especially verses 3 -5 we read of the Apostle Peter's instructions.

Christ is our source for new life: v.3

Peter said in verse 3, **"you have been given a new birth."** The Message Bible translates that same verse by saying, you have been given a "brand new life." But either way you say it, Peter was

reminding Christians of the source for true life comes from God's power revealed in the life of Jesus Christ. Real living comes from living life through the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

I understand that passage of scripture in this way. Whatever my pursuits are I need to ask whether Jesus himself would offer to me what I am pursuing. Whatever I like to read, would Jesus hey here is a book or magazine I highly recommend. Whatever I like to watch, whatever I like to use my spare time for and so forth. Could I see Jesus himself being the source that offers that opportunity or experience or principle to me because it will enhance my life and faith in him? All things we love and treasure need to be judged by him and whether he would offer such to us.

Illustration from Jerry Leach: We had a council meeting this past Monday. We were talking about our continued search for someone to lead the choir and be our worship leader. Jerry Leach mentioned the name of someone who might be a possibility and he made the comment that although the person had moved away from Newbern for a period of time, that person came back to live here. Jerry said, the person could **“never get rid of the Newbern dirt between their toes.”** I had to ask for clarification of what Jerry was saying. At first, I thought Jerry meant the person had a bad reputation. It turns out he meant the person has such a high appreciation for living in Newbern. **Peter was telling the church, our sense of living and where be belong needs to be centered in Jesus Christ.**

Pursue a hope that lives: Peter told the Christians they were given a “living hope.” Another way of saying that is we as Christians have a hope to pursue that will never die. When God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, it meant that there is a power and hope we can tap into that can never be killed or contained. Peter said you have been given a living hope; which means some people are chasing after hopes that lead to death and dead-ends.

Illustration from Time: One of our members passes along their Time Magazines to me and I was going through them the other day and came across an article about what people have paid for the personal effects of various celebrities. The ruby slippers Judy Garland wore in Wizard of OZ sold for 666,000.00 dollars. The false teeth of Winston Churchill sold for 24,500. John Lennon's toilet sold for 14,700. William Shatner, who played the captain in the Star Trek television series and movies, his kidney stone was purchased for 25,000 dollars. Justin Timberlake's two slices of uneaten French toast sold for 3,154 dollars. (Time Magazine)

Is there something deeper really going on that people are trying to hold onto to something and it is really about holding on to a dead hope that won't last.

I was visiting with a member the other day and sharing communion. They have shared with me about events in their life, and they have had their share of heartbreaks and in later years health issues. I asked them if it gets her down spiritually if it weakens her faith. They said no, their faith is strong and it carries them through the struggles.

*That is God's living hope. Not everyone trust in that living hope. Some will turn to drugs, alcohol, hobbies, buying false teeth or kidney stones of celebrities.

Given an eternal destination:

Peter said we have been given **“an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you.” v.4** There is nothing wrong with wanting to live a long, healthy life in this world. After all God gave us this life and all that God has given us is good. But to protect our identity is to live this life to the fullest, to keep in front of us that this life limited. This life is limited in the fulfillment it can provide. To protect our identity is

not make this life and things in it of ultimate importance to hang onto forever.

Instead we are to keep our Christian identity by knowing there is eternal life to gain or lose.

- Peter said what God has prepared is imperishable. This life will end but life with God is eternal.
- Peter said heaven is undefiled. Heaven is perfect. God will not let the impurity of this world enter into the next. That is the reason why I don't believe just everyone goes to heaven. The person who lives and dies defying, delaying, denying and distancing themselves from God stands in danger of missing out on eternal life because heaven is undefiled. God will not allow the heart that will not humble itself and recognize him as Lord to enter.
- Peter said our eternal destination is unfading. The sun and every light in the universe may burn out one day but whatever heaven is like will never lose its brilliance.

Illustration: I want you to hear me out before you judge what I am about to say but I was watching the news this week and it was about the miss-spelling of a man's name on the memorial at ground zero. I believe it was his sister who was distraught about it his name being misspelled. She kept insisting that the memorial had to be perfect, just perfect. It didn't seem to comfort her much that those responsible for the memorial assured her they would get the situation corrected. I know I cannot understand fully her grief; but nothing in this life is going to be perfect, that is dead hope, false hope.

Peter says live for the ultimate destination and that only will be perfect. Protect your identity as a Christian as a child of God by living for a life on Jesus can give, a quality of life that lives on eternally, a life that will wipe away the hurt and disappointments of this life.

