



## **UNITED BY HOPE – Part 1**

### **Elect Exiles**

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open up with me to 1 Peter 1.

While you're turning there, let me just say that if you were not with us last Sunday, I want to encourage you to listen to the message I shared then. It gave a lot of context for how we're moving forward together as a church this fall. I shared specific ways I'll come back to at the end of our time together today about getting connected to groups or classes and to service opportunities across all of our locations. Also, beyond our locations we have classes online for anybody from anywhere to be a part of. These include a midweek class I'm teaching on Foundations for Life in Christ and Leadership in the Church. I'll walk through a reminder of how you can find all these things. The point is we don't want anyone to walk through these days alone in their faith. It's vitally important that we get connected and stay connected to each other.

Last week I also shared that we're going to begin a new series today through the book of 1 Peter, a series we're titling "United By Hope." Picture the ropes the guys on stage were holding. At times we have various disagreements about different things in the church, but we are united together around Jesus and His Word. Over the coming weeks I want to show you specifically in 1 Peter how we're united by the hope we have in Jesus. It changes everything about our lives.

When we were praying about what book to study together this fall, 1 Peter quickly rose to the top. That's because it was written to Christians who were walking through hard times, in a world that was hostile to God and His Word. As we look at our lives in the church right now, I'd say we're walking through unusually hard times. The effects of a historic pandemic are still weighing on people in so many different ways. And we're definitely living in a country that I'd say in many ways is increasingly hostile to God and His Word.

This is why I can't wait for us to hear God's Word to us in these days. The book of 1 Peter was likely written from Rome when Peter was there. Rome was the seat of the government for the Roman Empire. So he's writing from Rome to Christians spread throughout the Roman Empire in the first century. So if we were going to use our country as an example, it would be like Peter writing this letter from Washington, DC, to Christians spread throughout the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As a reminder, I want to challenge those of you who are up for it—kids, teenagers, adults, from the youngest to the oldest, you can do this—to memorize 1 Peter 1 together this fall. It's just a verse or two a

week, then in the end you'll have a chapter of the Bible hidden in your heart. If you're taking that challenge, let me invite you to say this out loud without looking, but for the rest, I invite you to read 1 Peter 1:1-3 out loud with me. This is the Word of God.

*<sup>1</sup> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> 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: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. <sup>3</sup> 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.*

We'll stop there today. Will you pray with me?

God, please help us understand the wonder of what You just said, of what You are saying to us today amidst all that's going on in our lives and in the world around us. In the next few minutes, please do what only You can do through Your Spirit and Your Word. Please unite us around the hope we have in Jesus. God, I pray that in the next few minutes there might be some listening who experience hope and life in Jesus for the first time today. Only Your Spirit can do these things. So we pray that You would supernaturally speak to us right now, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **We must understand who we are before God in order to understand how to live in this world.**

“Who are you?” That’s the question I had to answer the first moment of coaching my kids’ sports teams this fall. I’m coaching two flag football teams and helping coach a soccer team—fully masked, by the way, and wearing hand sanitizer throughout practice and games. At our first practice we had to come up with a team name—which is a stressful exercise with a bunch of kids and a bunch of opinions. But my teams finally landed on the Tigers, the Blue Lightning...and the Football Team. In honor of the Washington Football Team, we’re just The Football Team. So the whole game I’m calling out, “Come on, Football Team! Great job, Football Team.” Defining who we are was important before we even took the field.

What I want to show you today is that this is all the more true in your life and in my life. The truth I want to show you today in 1 Peter 1:1-3 is that we must understand who we are before God in order to understand how to live in this world. This is true for each of us, regardless of whether or not we are followers of Jesus. Over the next few minutes, though, I want to speak specifically to Christians. In a way I hope soaks into your heart as you’re listening, I want to show you God’s answer to the question, “Who are you?” I want to show you who we are or basically what God says our team name is. The answer to that question is really important.

I was trying to think this week of how to picture this and thought of an illustration. It’s not a perfect illustration, so it will break down at many points, but I hope it will be helpful. So let me introduce you to Kemba Walker, who is going to join me up here throughout our time together. He’s a stand-out

college basketball player at the University of Connecticut, scoring more points in his junior year than anyone else in college basketball, appearing on the cover of Sports Illustrated magazine.

He left college early for the NBA, where he was drafted in the first round by the Charlotte Bobcats. Let's put this Charlotte jersey on Kemba and try not to knock him over. As I put this jersey on Kemba, let me tell you a little bit about the Bobcats. They have the honor of being the worst team in the history of the NBA. No other team has ever been as bad as the Charlotte Bobcats.



Specifically, in the first season Kemba was on the team, out of 66 games, the Bobcats won seven



of them. That year they had both the worse offense and the worse defense compared to every other team in the NBA. Not a good combination. They were so bad that the next year they announced they would change their team name to the Hornets, but that did not help. Over the next seven seasons, Kemba was on a team that never once won a playoff series, that never once even competed for a championship. As a team, they never had a player in the Hall of Fame who played most of their seasons for that team.

But then last year, something happened. Kemba was traded the Boston Celtics. So let's take off his Bobcats jersey and put this jersey on. Let me tell you a little bit about the Boston Celtics. In contrast to the Charlotte Bobcats, the Boston Celtics are the most successful team in the history of the NBA. They have won more championships than any other team and have more players in the Hall of Fame than any other team. In other words, Kemba Walker went from being on the worst team in the history of the NBA to being on the winningest team in the history of the NBA.



Everything changed when he put on this jersey. Just last night, Kemba Walker was playing in the NBA Conference finals with hall-of-famers looking on, instead of sitting at home watching them on TV without anyone looking on.

Now, you say, "What does this have to do with 1 Peter 1 and my life?" If you are a Christian, I want to show you today that the team you are on, according to 1 Peter 1, changes everything about how you understand and view your life in this world. Realizing what team you are on, what jersey you are wearing, will totally change everything in your life in this world and the way you view this world. It will change how you view other people, how you view your job or school, how you view the news, sports,

politics, arts, possessions—everything. I would go so far as to say that most, if not all, of our struggles in life, individually and together as a church, come from forgetting what team you and I are on. So what is our team name?

By the way, I offer a quick but important caveat here. I mentioned earlier there are limits to this illustration using team language. I'm not trying to picture Christians in opposition to or in competition with other people on other teams in this world. So don't take this illustration that way. I'm really just driving at who God says we are. And for those of you who may not yet be Christians, I want to show you who a Christian is, I hope in a way that you might say today, "I want to be that."

So with that caveat, on this first day in 1 Peter, what is our team name? Here it is, right there in 1 Peter 1:1. "*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles...*" ELECT EXILES. That is, according to God, our team name. It has a nice ring to it, doesn't it? You, Christian, right where you're listening now, you are on the Elect Exiles team. I so want you to realize what it means to be a part of this team. Four things are true of everybody on this team. These things are true of you and who you are as a follower of Jesus.

## **1. As part of the Elect Exiles, you are a stranger in a foreign land.**

First, as part of this team, you are strangers in a foreign land. That's what the word "exile" means. Different Bible translations use different words here, such as exile, foreigner, stranger or alien. The whole concept is you're a temporary resident in a foreign place. It's like you're a citizen of another country, living for the time being in a foreign country. You're not in your homeland. You actually long for your homeland while you live in this foreign land. Of course, you honor and respect the people and customs of this foreign country, but you don't adopt everything done there, because you don't ultimately belong there. This is hard.

I read a couple interesting books recently. One was written by a North Korean who had escaped North Korea and now lives in South Korea. The other was by a Syrian woman who fled Syria with her family in the middle of the war there, trying to get to Europe by boat with her fiancé and hundreds of others. But like many stories we've read or heard, that boat capsized. She and only a couple other people out of hundreds survived.

Both the North Korean man and the Syrian woman shared how hard it is to live in a land where no one understands you and everything seems foreign to you. I'm talking to a congregation where so many of you have experienced, and are still experiencing, this. You have come from different countries. Many of you are first generation, others are second or third generation, but there can still be some struggle with identity.

What's interesting is that this is the way God describes all of us as Christians in this world. Think about it. Peter writes to "...*those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.*" Keep in mind, some of the people to whom Peter was writing were born in these

places, so they were citizens of the Roman Empire. And that's the point of what Peter is saying. By calling them exiles who are dispersed, God is telling His people that even if they were born and raised in the home they're living in right now, that's not their home. They have a different home in a different homeland. They may be temporary citizens of these parts of the Roman Empire, but they're foreigners there. Their citizenship is in another country.

To use language from Paul in Philippians 3:20 that we looked at this summer, their citizenship is in heaven. Talking about those who are on God's team who have gone before us, the Bible says this in Hebrews 11:13-16:

*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

I want to take this language and apply it to you and me, us, right now. Here in 1 Peter 1:1, God is speaking to us in this gathering, particularly as McLean Bible Church in Metro Washington, DC today, "To all the foreigners living in Fairfax County, Montgomery County, Loudon County, Prince William County and Arlington County, then beyond these counties to people living across this country."

This is the Bible speaking to all you foreigners who are living in the United States. God labels you a "foreigner" in this country. God tells us we are strangers in a foreign land. Most of us may be citizens of the United States and should be thankful for so much that goes with that. We should be thankful for all kinds of people across our church and beyond our church, in the military, in the government and in law enforcement who spend their lives protecting freedom and promoting good in our country, and in other countries for that matter. We are and should be extremely thankful. Yet, our citizenship in this country is extremely temporary. That means we're foreigners in the United States because we belong to another country. We have another homeland that we long for, fight for and live for far more than this one.

That's why in this book on voting that I wrote, amidst all the rhetoric in an election season from all sides, I encourage us to guard our hearts. The ultimate aim of our hearts is not the good of our nation. As much as that's a good desire, it's not our ultimate aim. This would be our ultimate aim if our ultimate citizenship and allegiance were here, but they're not. We're only here for a little while. We are foreigners here. Our ultimate allegiance and citizenship are in another country, a heavenly one. That means our ultimate aim is not the good of our nation. Rather, our ultimate aim is the spread of the gospel and the glory of our God in our nation and to all the nations.

Now we're starting to see how our understanding of who we are changes the way we view the world around us and how we live in it. It would be like the Boston Celtics playing in Charlotte with Kimba

Walker on the team. When he gets there he starts playing like he is still on the Bobcats team. The coach would be like, “Dude, you’re not a Bobcat. Remember, you don’t want to be a Bobcat. It’s not your team.”

God is saying to us today, “You are exiles here. Don’t ever forget that this is not your country. You’re a foreigner here, so live like it. Don’t adopt all the customs, patterns and priorities of this country. Sure, respect and honor the land you’re in—whatever country it might be—but live differently, because you don’t belong there. It’s not your home. You’re an exile here.”

## **2. As part of the Elect Exiles, you are eternally loved by God the Father.**

We’re not just exiles—we’re elect exiles. This is good. Think about what this means. What makes us exiles? What makes us strangers in a foreign land? The answer is: the election of God. That’s the word he uses, “elect.” As part of the Elect Exiles, what makes you a foreigner in this country and in this world is that you are eternally loved by God the Father. You’re an elect exile *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...”*

Let’s think about the word elect. It’s common to us right now in this season in our country. It means to choose someone. The jaw-dropping reality of 1 Peter 1 is that God the Father has elected—chosen—you to be on His team. Which begs the question why? This is another place where our Kemba Walker illustration breaks down. The Celtics chose Kemba Walker to be on their team because he is a really good basketball player. They wanted him because of his performance. But that’s not why God the Father chose you or me.

There are two reasons we can know that. One, our performance has never been worthy of being chosen by the holy God of the universe. In fact, everything in our performance has shouted to God, “You don’t want me.” We have shouted to God, “We don’t want You.” Every one of us listening right now has rebelled against God. This is true of every one of our hearts. Each of us have run from God’s ways to our own ways. If God let us continue in the path we choose, then we would all be on a road right now that leads to eternal separation from Him in judgment. To think any differently is to be deceived about your own heart. But thankfully, God chose to rescue us from that road.

This is the other reason we know it’s not based on our performance, because the Bible says God chose—elected—us according to His foreknowledge. Does foreknowledge just mean God knew in advance that we were going to choose Him? No. This word means that God decided long ago to love and pursue you, before you were even born, before you even stepped foot on the court of life. Listen to how the Bible uses this language in Romans 8:29: *“For those whom he foreknew”* —same word there— *“he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.”* God destined you to be saved from your sin by His Son Jesus.

So if you’re not a Christian, let me pause here and make this really clear. How is it possible for us in our sin to be destined to be saved from our sin? That’s only possible through what Jesus, the Son of God, has done on a cross. We’ve all sinned against God, so God has sent His Son Jesus to pay the price for

all of our sin against God. He's taken the penalty and judgment upon Himself that is due each of us for our sin. He died on a cross, then He rose from the grave, conquering sin and death, so that anyone who trusts in Jesus can be forgiven of all their sin and restored to relationship with God, experiencing His love.

Ephesians 1:3-6 puts it this way, talking about Christians:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace.*

Did you hear that? Before the foundation of the world, God chose to love you. God destined to adopt you as His child, to save you from your sin. It's not because of anything you had done. You weren't even born. It's not because of anything you would do, because you rebelled against Him as soon as you had the opportunity. The only reason you're on God's team is because of His glorious grace. You're an Elect Exile because of His foreknowledge and grace. This is so foundational for every Christian to realize. You are on the team, not because you made it based on your performance, but because God called you by His grace.

I love the way Charles Spurgeon, one of my favorite pastors in history, describes this. He's talking about the moment when he first realized what it means to be elected by God, loved by God.

When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself. Though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young Christian is first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received the truth of election in my own soul and I can recollect how I felt. I had grown all of a sudden from a babe into a man. But I made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found once for all the clue to the truth of God.

One week night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, and the thought struck me, "How did you come to be a Christian?" I sought the Lord, I thought. "But how did you come to seek the Lord?" The truth flashed across my mind in a moment: I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, "How came I to pray?" Well, I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. "How came I to read the Scriptures?" I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, that He was the Author of my faith.

So the doctrine of grace opened up to me and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day. I desire to make this my constant confession: I ascribe my change wholly to God.

Spurgeon says, "I realized in that moment, I am who I am because of who God says I am." That changes everything. This fundamentally defines who you are. In a world that tries to define you in all sorts of other ways, hear this loud and clear. No one and nothing else defines you. Your job does not define you. Your net worth does not define you. Your possessions—your house, your car—do not define you. Your physical appearance does not define you. Your ethnicity does not define you. Your nationality does not

define you. Your political party does not define you. Your marital status does not define you. Your past does not define you. Your critics do not define you.

The God of the universe says, “I define you—and you are loved by Me.” Let that soak in. Hear these words from God to your heart right now. He says, “I have loved you from before time even began.” Let that thought totally transform the way you wake up every morning, the way you go through hard days, the way you walk through challenging times. If you’re walking through them right now, just remember that the One Who matters most—the God of the universe—loves you, cares for you and is committed to you. He has been from the beginning of time and He will be for all time.

This is also radically hope-giving, isn’t it? Just apply this to the current season in our country, with all sorts of tension and unrest in an election year. Church, we don’t have to worry about this election. Sure, we are rightly and biblically concerned about all kinds of issues in an election, including this one. But we are not worried, because God tells all those who are on His team, “You don’t ever have to worry about anything.” We see this in Philippians 4:6.

That includes elections. Do you know why? Because throughout history, leaders have risen and leaders have fallen. Presidents have come and presidents have gone. Through it all, one King has remained constant. Regardless of who is president in our country, our King will be in control. We are Elect Exiles of His Kingdom and He loves us. That means we don’t have to worry about anything. Nothing. Realizing you are eternally loved by God the Father changes everything.

### **3. As part of the Elect Exiles, you are set apart by God the Spirit.**

You are eternally loved by God the Father, but not just that. You are also set apart by God the Spirit. The whole Trinity is involved in this picture. God says you are Elect Exiles “*in the sanctification of the Spirit.*” (1 Peter 1:2). That word “sanctification” means “set apart for a purpose.” Here’s the picture we’re going to see unfold as 1 Peter progresses. God has put us on this team for a reason: that we might experience His life in us, according to the supernatural power of His Holy Spirit in us.

We’ve talked before about how you are destined for awesome. Romans 8:29 says, “...*those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.*” That means that as part of this team of Elect Exiles, we are destined by the supernatural power of God’s Holy Spirit in us to become more and more and more like Jesus in each of our lives.

Let me put the fourth thing up about what it means to be an Elect Exile, then we’ll tie it all together.

### **4. As part of the Elect Exiles, you are united with God the Son.**

To be an Elect Exile means you are sanctified in the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and united with God the Son. Get this picture. As a stranger in a foreign land, you are loved by God the Father, set

apart by God the Spirit, to experience life with God the Son, in obedience to Him. Let's put it all together practically.

The more you become like Jesus, the more you experience the abundant life God has created you to live. The more you become like Jesus, the more you experience the supernatural fruit of His Spirit in you. The more we become like Jesus, the more we experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Who among us does not want all of those things in ever-increasing measure? We're elected to experience life like this, a life united with Jesus in all of His humility, integrity, purity, compassion and mercy. And it's not just what we want for ourselves. Isn't this what we want to live before others in this world? Isn't this what we want to give to others? The greatest gift I can give my wife and kids is to look more like Jesus tomorrow than I do today. That's their greatest need from me as husband and as dad.

Your spouse, your kids, your parents—their greatest need from you is for you to look more like Jesus. The greatest need your coworkers and neighbors have is for you to look more like Jesus, to live more like Jesus, to love more like Jesus. A life united with Jesus, walking with Jesus, is good for us and good for others. Yet we all fall short, don't we? I do. You do. We all do.

That's what's so beautiful about this last phrase in verse two: “...and for sprinkling with his blood.” I don't have time to go back to Exodus 24 to talk about the background here, but when God's people entered into covenant relationship with Him, blood was sprinkled over them as a picture of God's faithfulness to them even when they would be unfaithful to Him.

Here in 1 Peter, God is reminding us in a much greater way that when we fall short, the blood of Jesus Christ covers over our sin if we're united with His life and death for our sins and in His resurrection from the grave. We'll talk more about this next week from 1 Peter 1:3: “*Blessed be the god and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy*” —not our performance, but His mercy— “*he has caused us*” —He did this— “*to be born again*” —to be on a new team— “*to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*”

Do you see it? As an Exile, we have living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. We're looking forward to another homeland. We look at conflict, tension, struggles, trials all around us in this world and the good news is this is not the end of the story. We have another country we're going to where we will experience life with our God; life free from sorrow, free from sin, free from struggle. This is guaranteed—why? Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In other words, you have a life united with Jesus that will never, ever end, so even when you die, you will live forever with Him as part of this team.

I think back to our basketball illustration. I cannot imagine what it is like to put on a Celtics jersey. I could put this jersey on, but I will never rightfully put on a Celtics jersey on a basketball court. Just think about who you would be sharing that jersey with. You're wearing the same jersey as Bill Russell who won eleven championships in his 13-year career. Most guys never win one championship. He won one almost

every year he played. He was so good in big games that the NBA created and then named the Finals MVP trophy after him. His name is on the MVP trophy—and you’re wearing his jersey.

Or you’re wearing the same jersey as Larry Bird—“Larry The Legend.” The dude at one point won back-to-back-to-back MVP awards. He totally dominated the league. He scored over 21,000 points, made over 10,000 rebounds and over 5,000 assists. I can list the names of 36 other Hall-of-Famers who have worn the Celtics jersey. But I have a better list to give you.

I just want you to realize who some of your teammates are. I want you to realize who you share a jersey with, right where you’re sitting now. When you put on this Elect Exiles jersey, you’re wearing the same jersey that Moses did, the man who led God’s people out of slavery, who lifted up his hands and saw an entire sea split in front of him. You’re wearing the same jersey as Hannah did, the woman who cried out for a child in her barrenness, then God gave her a son named Samuel. You’re wearing the same jersey as Elijah who stood against hundreds of false prophets, who called down fire from heaven and rain from the sky. You’re wearing the same jersey as Ruth who walked a hard road of heartache, grief, pain and loss that eventually led to redemption she never could have dreamed of. You are wearing the same jersey as Ezekiel who we’re going to read week this week . When his precious wife died, he wasn’t even allowed to mourn, yet he trusted in God. You’re wearing the same jersey as Peter, James, John, Mary and Martha who saw Jesus, who sat at His feet, who walked at His side, who watched Him die and then gave their lives spreading His love.

If you keep going, you’re wearing the same jersey as Polycarp who was 86 years old when he was taken to the stake and told to worship the Roman emperor or burn. He said, “How can I blaspheme my King and Savior? You threaten me with fire that burns for a season and after a little while is quenched, but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment that is prepared for the wicked.” So they set him ablaze and he prayed, “I bless you Father, for judging me worthy of this hour, that I might share the cup of Christ.”

You’re wearing the same jersey as Perpetua, who was 22 years old and just had a baby when she was imprisoned for becoming a follower of Jesus. She refused to recant her faith and they threw her to wild beasts in the arena. I could go on and on and on and on with name after name after name in history. All of them have worn this jersey and have realized they were strangers here. They were living for another land, because they were being led by another King—the Captain of this team, the ultimate Elect Exile, Jesus, God in the flesh.

First Peter 1:20 says He was foreknown by the Father and was sent as the Son to pay the price for sinners like you and me, to die on a cross. Then three days later, our Captain rose from the grave. The Captain of our team has conquered death. Then before He ascended into heaven, He commissioned His team to make His love, grace and glory known to the ends of the earth. This is the team you’re on. They’re all up in heaven right now, all of them, cheering you on. In the middle of a pandemic, in the middle of whatever you’re walking through, they are cheering you on. They’re saying, “Don’t forget who you are.

You are eternally loved by God the Father. You are set apart by God the Spirit. You are united with God the Son. So live as a stranger here in this world. Don't live for what this world lives for. Put all your hope every day in the world to come."

In the process, church, don't forget, we're on the same team. We're Elect Exiles, united by hope.

Will you pray with me? With your head bowed, whether you're sitting in this room or listening somewhere else, I want to ask you first and foremost if you are an Elect Exile. As we've walked through this word, are you thinking, "Yes, that's me"? It's not because of your performance, but because you have put all your trust in Jesus to save you from your sins. If the answer to that question is no—that you've not trusted in Jesus to save you from your sins and to lead you as Lord of your life—then I invite to do so today. God is calling your name right now. I invite you to say, "Yes." If you want to trust in Jesus, just say, "God, I have turned from Your ways to my ways. I have rebelled against You. But today is the day I trust in what Jesus has done on the cross for me. Today I believe that He died for my forgiveness. He died that I might have life. So today I receive that life. Today I receive Your love. Today I experience, by faith in You, living hope." I urge you—trust in Jesus.

Christian, pray for those who are experiencing this work in their hearts right now.

Father, for all who have already trusted in Him, help us realize that in everything we do, every word we speak, every word we type, every thought and desire we have, every decision we make and action we take, help us to do it all as Elect Exiles, as strangers here who are loved by You, who are set apart by Your Spirit, who are united with Jesus. May His life be ours, individually and together as a church, in ever-increasing measure.

Please bless our time in 1 Peter together toward that end that as Your people we might indeed be united by hope as Elect Exiles. Thank You, O God, for the privilege of being on this team. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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