

## Introduction

Good Morning. Is everybody feeling rested? You got that extra hour in you? Are you happy? Yeah; that's good. I'm going to preach two hours today. You're going to need it. Alright. So here we go. If you have your Bible, go ahead and get that out. Open it up with me to the Book of John and the Book of 1 Peter. We are going to start in John chapter 6, and then we're going to spend the bulk of our time this morning in 1 Peter chapter 1. We are going through a series right now called "What On Earth Am I Here For?" As part of that series, we are reading a devotional together. In that devotional today, we started a new section where we're talking about the fact that God created us for very specific purposes. We talked first about the fact that all of us are called, and when we're called by God, we are called to worship and then we are also called into fellowship in the Church. Today we're going to start looking at a new reason that God calls us and that is to be conformed into the image of Christ. I'm really excited about talking about this today. I think that God has a lot of things that He wants to teach us through this, so I want you to really just enjoy as we look at God's Word and see what it is that God wants to teach you and teach me as we look at the Book of 1 Peter today. So, it's going to be a lot of fun. Let's pray together and then we'll jump right into it.

"God, You made us. We're not an accident. As we've read in our devotional, there may be accidental parents, but there are no accidental children of God. God, thank you for that. Father, You have a specific purpose that You have declared through your Word for each of us and that is that we might be formed into the image of Jesus, your Son. Father, I pray that we would receive that and that we would respond toward it with our lives. God, we love You. There are some people in this room that they're coming to church for the first time in a long time. I pray that You would speak to them. God, there are some people in this room that they're not even really sure why they're here. God, I pray that You would speak to them. Father, there are some people here that they've been away from You. I pray that You would speak to them. God, there are some of us that maybe we've been so accustomed to You and your Word that it's grown cold to us, and God I pray that You would speak to them. Father, we pray the promise of Scripture that your Word will not return void, so Lord we ask that You would change hearts and minds in this place today, through the power of your Holy Spirit. We ask it in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen."

Why do people turn away from the faith? It's a question that we don't really talk about a whole lot in church. It's kind of one of those dirty little secrets that nobody really ever likes to bring up. But the truth of the matter is that if you've been a Christian any amount of time, then you know people who at one point acted as if they were on fire for the Lord and then they turned away from it. They were people who came to church all the time. They celebrated at church. They were having a blast, and then they decided they were done with it and they walked away. Why? What is it that causes that sort of thing? You know, Peter had an instance in his life where he saw some people walk away from the faith. Now I'm not talking about what we looked at last week where he denied Christ in a moment of fear. I'm talking about people who turned away and said, "I'm no longer going to follow Jesus." What is it that causes that? Let's look in John 6, starting in verse 52. Jesus has been teaching that He is the Bread of Life. Why is He teaching that He is the Bread of Life? Because He has just fed 5000 people and people are showing up. They are wanting to know this Jesus more because of the fact that "Hey, He's giving out food. Let's see what He's got to say here," and so He tells them, "I am the Bread of Life." In verse 52 we read this: *"The Jews then disputed among themselves saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on Me, he also will*

*live because of Me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this Bread will live forever.' Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as He taught at Capernaum. When many of His disciples heard it, they said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?' But Jesus, knowing in Himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, 'Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life, but there are some of you who do not believe.' (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was that would betray Him.) And He said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father.' After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'"* Verse 66 says some people, from that point forward, turned and no longer followed Him.

This last week, one of our staff members came in and said, "Hey, we need prayer. We have a family member who used to be a solid, solid believer, or so we thought, and now he is saying he is an atheist. I have a friend that I was really good friends with earlier in life, in high school. In fact, there was a time when I actually served in ministry in his life, and now he would declare openly that he no longer believes that there is a God or if there is a God it's not the God that he has read about in the Bible. Why? Why is it that people reach a moment and they turn their back, and they walk away from the God that is revealed in Jesus Christ? You know, I think the answer, when you get right down to it, is really about what it is that we are going to study this week. It's about maturity because maturity demands that my view of God cannot stay the same. But, for many of us, the view of God that we hold or that we have been exposed to is not the mature view of God. So, as we begin to discover what maturity in faith would require and what it would look like, we decide that we don't want that.

Whenever I first got married, if I can be really honest with you, I was very immature in my view of marriage. I shared with you guys before that my parents were divorced whenever I was very young, and because of that I had a very broken view of marriage whenever I entered into marriage. In fact, I thought that marriage meant that we would always get along really, really well, and we would never have any problems, you know, this sort of thing. You can imagine then my fear and my frustration when my wife and I had our very first sharp disagreement once we had been married. I mean, literally, I was distraught because I thought that this meant that my wife was going to leave me. Now some of you who are married would be like, "Man, I've been feeling like that three or four times a day. I mean, that's kind of unfortunate." (Laughter) You know what? At first, it really was kind of like that because I had never seen my parents work toward healthy maturity, and then whenever my Mom remarried and the man that I lived with after that, they just got along perfectly, so I had never really had to see people have sharp disagreements and then work through those things together. I just thought, "Oh, well this thing is over." Now, that's a pretty immature view of marriage, but I didn't know any better. The point being that each and every one of us, whenever we come into the faith, most of us have a very immature view of what it means to be a Christian. There's not anything wrong with that. I think that everyone would expect that, whenever you are new to the faith, but the problem is if we never change our view of what it means to be a Christian and if we never grow up into what the Bible tells us is a mature view. I think the people in John 6:66 walked away from the faith because they didn't have a mature view of what it meant to follow Jesus Christ.

## 1. Hopeful in grace. (v. 13)

Today, I want to talk to about what I believe that Peter begins to describe is what a mature conception of being a Christian actually truly is. I think that Peter describes it very well in 1 Peter chapter 1, so that's what we are going to look at today. I think that reflecting back on this incident in John 6:66, where people turn their back on Jesus, Peter looks back and he says, "You know what? I can tell you some of the marks of maturity in the faith." So, let's look at 1 Peter together, and let's start reading in 1 Peter 1:13. It says, *"Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded..."* By the way, the word there for sober-minded...literally, that's translated "gird your loins." In other words, this is something that warriors did before they went into battle. This was something that athletes did before they went into the ring. In other words, this is not little boy-little girl time. This is grownup action time. *"...set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourself with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God. 'For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever.' And this Word is the Good News that was preached to you."*

So how do you reach a point where you feel comfortable in knowing, "Okay, I understand what it means to be mature in faith? How is it that I know that I am growing into what it is that God wants me to be?" Well, we know in Ephesians 1 it says that we are to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ, to be conformed into that likeness. I think that here Peter really starts to show us what that looks like. So what does he tell us at the very first? Well, in verse 13 he says this: "If you want to be someone who doesn't walk away from the faith, it starts with you setting your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." In other words, he says, "You have to have hope, and that hope has to be set on the grace of Jesus." Why the grace of Jesus? Because you need to know that you can only be close to God, you can only be saved, and you can only be transformed because of what God has done through Jesus Christ. Now, that may seem like a really basic thing, but let's just be really honest right now. There are tons of people in this world who have gone to church their entire lives, and they have never understood this simple fact: You can never do enough to be close to God. You can never impress God with your actions. You will never be a good enough father or husband to impress God. You will never be generous enough to impress God. God does not care about that. Paul said that stuff is rubbish, filthy rags. You know, this is the honest point. We only come to God not because of anything that we do but because of what God did Himself through Jesus to bring us near. So God does all the work through Jesus. That is what we call grace. We don't deserve it. We don't earn it. God just gives it to us through His Son. Now, "hope in the grace that comes through Jesus." So what does it mean to hope? Hope is this thing that helps you get through the day. Now every person in this room, you're hoping in something. If you have not decided to take your own life, you have reached a point where you have decided, "I will hope, I will believe that something is going to break my way. Something is going to go the way that I want it to. Things are going to eventually move in the direction that I believe that they should move." I believe, I trust, I hope in certain things and I do that.

Those are the things that give us meaning and purpose in life. "I hope in these things and I hope that this is the direction that things are going to go." So Peter says, "You have to set this hope on grace, not on something else. Set it on grace." What does it look like for me to set my hope on grace?

Back in 1995, a pastor by the name of John Piper wrote a book called "Future Grace." In that book, this is what he said: "Future grace is this idea of setting your hope in grace." and this is basically what his argument is. He says, "Every day you are going to be tempted to do things that go against the grace of God, that go against God's nature, that go against God's plan for your life. In that moment, you will have a choice. You will either choose to be obedient, and if you choose to be obedient then what will happen in that time is that you will decide that God's grace in the future will be sufficient to give you more pleasure than whatever it is you are considering doing right now." Most of the time, whenever you jump into any sin, whatever that sin is, you do it because you believe it's going to bring you pleasure. What Piper says is that "future grace is trusting that the grace that God has yet to work in my life, out there in the future, will one day bring me pleasure which will surpass whatever pleasure I might be tempted by right now. So, trusting in future grace gives me the power to have obedience in the present." That's his argument and that is what Peter is essentially saying right here. "Put your hope in the grace that will be revealed to you in Jesus Christ." You haven't seen it fully yet. You haven't seen Jesus face-to-face yet. You haven't completely understood it yet, but there will be a day when God will show you Jesus, and on that day everything will make sense to you, and on that day you will go, "Oh... this has been worth me being obedient right now. This has been worth me hoping in the grace that comes from God. Right now, I can be hopeful because I believe that what God will do and has done through Jesus will be enough." Being hopeful in grace is believing that God will make you into the image of Christ, even if right now, sitting in this room, you say "You don't know how bad I am." Being hopeful in grace is believing that the joy and beauty of heaven and eternity will far outweigh any temporary pleasures you might opt for today. Being hopeful in grace is finding your hope in the faithfulness and in the trustworthiness of God. Being hopeful in grace is believing that the reason that God has created you is so that you might be conformed into the image of Jesus. That's why God made you, and you have to trust and believe that that's true. Now if that's true, things start to move very quickly. You see, the people in John 6, they were not mature because they were setting their hope in something other than the grace of Christ. What were they setting their hope in? I don't know. Good question. We don't really know for sure. We know that right before that, Jesus had fed 5000 people. Then right after that, He had healed some folks. There were miracles. I mean, maybe they were there for the entertainment. It would be, "Man, this is dinner and a show right here." (Laughter) "I'm going to get some food, and then He healed some people. This is awesome" Maybe they were there for the entertainment value. Maybe they were like, "Hey... free food, free healthcare. Just follow this guy wherever He goes. It's going to be great." Maybe that was their thing. I don't know. But there came a point where Jesus made it very clear. "No, no, no. I'm not just here to give you stuff. I'm here to proclaim the truth about who I am."

Now, there's a whole lot of debate in the church world today. I will spare you most of the details, but basically it comes down to this: "Is it okay to have coffee in your church and to have fun things for kids and have Easter egg hunts and this kind of stuff? If we do that, are we just creating consumers?" And the answer is, "Maybe." This is the deal. Whenever you come into church, if you only come for the Easter egg hunt or for the coffee or for the playground or whatever, there will come a point, whenever someone will stand on this platform and will proclaim the truth about who God is, and then you will have to decide why you come to church. You see, there are people in John 6 who were like, "I thought this was just about getting free food and seeing people healed. You're actually expecting me to follow You? Yeah... I'm out on that." And they turn around and they leave. There are people every day who come to church and when

they come to church they have set their hope on something else. I mean, sometimes it's not anything as base as Easter egg hunts and coffee. It may be something that feels better but it's different. "I go to church because those people are really nice to me, and I need someone to be nice to me." I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. "I go to church because those people minister to me, and they love me in the middle of my brokenness." That's a good thing but there will come a moment when you have to decide, "What is it that you set your hope on?" because all people will eventually disappoint you. All people will somehow accidentally hurt your feelings. I will accidentally hurt your feelings. The only person who will never leave you nor forsake you nor disappoint you is Jesus, so you have to come to a point where you say, "I've set my hope on one good right and important thing and that thing is Jesus."

Whenever I was a kid, at the age of eight, I knew what God had called me to do. I mean, I knew that. It was kind of overwhelming, but I knew very clearly that He had called me to be the quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys... (Laughter) ...and so I worked really hard from that moment, that point in my life, to fulfill that calling. (Laughter) So insert long story there... that didn't happen. The bottom line of that is this. It is that if I stood up right now as a 38-year-old man and I told you that I am bitter and angry because God did not make me quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys, you guys would laugh at me. "That's stupid. You're ridiculous. You're delusional." But do you know what's funny? It is how many people carry delusional views and perspectives of God to church every single week, and we let them do it. It is funny, right?

I have friends that stopped going to church because they were struggling with infertility issues. They said, "We aren't going back to church until God gives us a baby..." ...like they can hold God hostage. Do you know what's funny? It is that they were surrounded by people who affirmed that perspective. "You do what you need to do. You take time." No. That's bull. The point of Scripture is this: God is God whether you get a baby or not... in every season, right? (Clapping) Now, if you are in this room and you're struggling with infertility, this is not me saying that that's not a painful issue. Of course it's a painful issue. This is what I'm saying: "God is still on his throne. He is worthy of worship whether you have a child or not. He is worthy of worship whether you are going to die of cancer or not. He is worthy of worship in every season." Right? Our problem sometimes is that we feed people's rather sycophantic and narcissistic perspectives on God. We let them believe that God exists for them when it's actually the exact opposite. So what happens is this. It is that people come to church week in and week out, and they believe rather delusional things that have nothing to do with Scripture. What are you setting your hope on? Are you attempting to hold God hostage? If so, wake up. That ain't happening... because He's God. So the point is this. It is that you have to set your hope on Him. You have to go after his grace because He has already bestowed it. He has given it to you, now you have to receive that grace. So the thing is that as He extends it and you receive it, then things begin to be changed because then you can set your hope on that grace. So once that grace comes and you realize, "I didn't earn it. I don't deserve it. God just gave it." Once that happens, then things begin to change.

## **2. Conformed in holiness. (v. 15)**

Now, verse 15: *"...as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct..."* Now we talked about holiness a whole lot in church whenever I was a kid. That basically meant, "Don't get your girlfriend pregnant." I mean, that was what holiness was whenever I went to church as a kid. "Don't cuss whenever the preacher is around," and this kind of stuff. Do you know what holiness really is? Holiness in the Bible means, "It has been set apart for the use of God, for the purposes that God wants them to be used." Let me break that down for you.

Whenever we got married, we got 18 place settings of china. Did anybody else get china when you got married and you got all these dishes? So, the china is reserved for very special occasions, which means we never use it in my house. (Laughter) So it's just up in the cabinet. We got gravy boats with this certain pattern on it. We've got ladles with patterns on it. They all match. What would happen if my wife came home and she saw me feeding my kids frozen pizza on the fine china? (Laughter) I mean, I don't know that she'd be angry, but she would be like, "What are doing?" "Well, having dinner. Got the plates out, threw the frozen pizza on it. It's good. Get yourself a slice." She'd say, "Listen fool, the Red Baron doesn't fly on the fine china..." (Laughter) "That's not the way this works." (Laughter) Why would she say that? Because she would say, "The fine china is reserved for when we have nice occasions, important guests over... This is a big celebration." We occasionally do break that out, and it is a big deal when we do that. Holiness is kind of like that. It means, "You have been set aside for a very specific purpose." Right? Set aside for a very specific and intentional purpose. The point of this entire thing here is this: What Peter says is, "I want you to be conformed by holiness by understanding that once you've set your hope on grace then you are to be used for a very special purpose." The problem is that he says, "Don't be conformed" in verse 14... "*Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.*" Passions of ignorance... "epithumia." That's the word there for passions. But passions of ignorance, what does that mean? These passions of ignorance... the Greek structure there basically says, "You want things that don't belong to you." "Don't let your heart be conformed by things that you want that aren't yours in the first place. Instead, be conformed by the purpose that God has for you."

What's "epithumia"? "Epithumia" is when I take my kids to Chick-fil-A, and I want their waffle fry. That does not belong to me. I smell it. I know that I can take it. (Laughter) I bought it but it is still not my waffle fry. Right? I've given it to them. Epithumia can go all the way up to not just waffle fries... "I'm stealing some money. I'm embezzling. I'm hiding transactions. I'm stealing someone else's spouse." These are ignorant and fleshly desires. These are desires that do not come from the right place. Now, it's not just any desire. Desires are a good thing, if you are desiring the right thing. What Peter is saying is, "I want you to desire the thing that comes from holiness."

So what is holiness then? Holiness is this: I say, "God, You have graced me. I didn't deserve it. I didn't earn it. You just gave your Son Jesus Christ. I don't know why You love me so much, so richly and so vastly that You lavish this upon me. Thank you for that." Holiness is then, He now says, "So this is how you ought to act. This is the life of the fine china vessel of my child." The problem is that too many of us like being paper plates. Right? We just want to go back to living the old common ordinary life. We reject holiness. We like our ignorant passions instead of liking holiness. Why? Because holiness is difficult. Let's just be real honest. Holiness is tough. Holiness is saying, "The grace of God that came to the cross, I want you to reflect that." Look... the cross is pain. It's tough. He says, "You are going to reflect that with your life." If you have been told that God wants you to be happy, you will not find that in the Bible. Did you know that? You won't find it. Do you know what you will find? "Pick up your cross, follow after Me." So here's the thing. God's primary objective in your life is not to make you happy. God's primary objective is for you to grow up into the likeness of Jesus. Those things won't always be rainbows and unicorns, but those things will always be good. You see, holiness, for many of us, became about kind of a weird dead moralism. I mean that I know that a lot of you have probably heard this, if you grew up going to church or maybe you've heard some other people talk about holiness. What they think is this: "I can't go to church or I can't become a Christian until I stop doing x, y, and z".... whatever that is. You've said, "You know, I can't become a Christian until I stop drinking, stop smoking. I've got an addiction that I struggle with..." whatever that is. Listen. I want you to hear me on this. That's not what the Bible says. Actually what the Bible says in Romans 5:8 is "*...that while we were still sinners...*" ...while we were still in the middle of all the junk that we weren't supposed to

be doing... "...*Christ died for us.*" What does that mean? That means that you can come to Christ broken and needful right now. You say, "I don't know how I'm ever going to stop doing all this stuff." You know what? I don't either but I believe that God's grace is a good enough tool to help you work through that. You know what? Sometimes people get saved and you know what happens? Their life just turns on a dime. You know what? Some of them, like me, I'll just tell you right now... I had things that God took 20 years to work out in my life, but I was still saved by grace because I can't earn it. I think that sometimes God lets those things stick around because He wants to remind us, "You didn't do this by your sheer willpower. This is my grace working in you over time, slowly changing you into the likeness of my Son." So, you see, I want us to understand that some people reject Jesus because they believe that what happens in here is the teaching of moralism. They think that if I do these good things then God will love me enough so that I can be saved. Other people in this room have rejected Christ because they say these temporary and ignorant desires are better than holiness. Both of those are wrong. It is better to have holiness and holiness won't come automatically. Holiness comes when I set my hope on grace and then I walk toward that. It's like a marathon. It's not like a sprint. You will walk and walk and walk, and you'll wake up one day and you'll say, "I don't struggle with that as much as I used to." You'll wake up one day and you'll say, "I don't need that as much as I used to. I long for Jesus now in those areas." I don't want to lie to you and say it's just going to happen just like that, but I think that sometimes people reject Christ because they know kind of innately that it's going to be hard to follow Him, and so they just don't do it. But holiness is worth it because in the end, that future grace thing we talked about, the payoff is rich. It's rich.

### 3. Aware of the ransom. (v. 18)

So how do I set my hope on Christ and then how do I get to this place where once I've set that hope that then I can walk in holiness? It comes there in verse 18, and this is sort of the payoff that Peter brings. He says this: "All this comes because you are '*...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold.*'" You were ransomed. Now some of your translations you might be using today might say "redeemed." The word "redeemed" or "ransomed" is the same word there actually in the Greek. Redeeming there, in our culture, is how we would redeem a coupon. It's the idea that something has monetary value if it is given to the correct person. The way it was typically used in ancient Judaism is the idea of you redeem a slave. So in other words, a slave couldn't be freed until a price had been paid for their freedom. So that was the idea, someone who was a captive or a slave could only be rescued once they had been redeemed, once they'd been paid for. But it's actually different as well, even if we use the way that we understand the word "ransom" in the sense of being kidnapped. Pretend that you're kidnapped. You've been kidnapped and they get you in a dark room and they beat you up, they rough you up, and then they call your friends or they call your family, whoever they would call to ask for the ransom, and they say, "I need five million dollars or I'm going to kill this person." Now, if you're like me, whenever you hear that, you're like, "Well, I'm dead." (Laughter) "Nice knowing you everybody." It's not going to happen. Your friends and your family, they tell them, "We don't have five million dollars. We couldn't scrape up all the money between all of us and still save your life. It's just not going to happen. We don't have that kind of money. Well, if we don't have this money then this person is going to die." And then all of the sudden, out of the blue, a benefactor comes forward. You don't know this person. They just heard about your plight. You know what they do? They pay the five million dollars and you're set free. How would you respond toward that person? I mean, you would hug them. You would thank them. You would be so grateful because they rescued you. They paid your ransom. You were redeemed. You were set free because they paid this, right? What Peter says is, "You were captive, and you were ransomed, and a price was paid that you couldn't afford. The price was the blood of Jesus Christ." That was the price that it took to save you. You were, some of us in this room still are, captives. Do

you know what you are captive to? You're captive to your sin. I don't mean like some kind of behavior. I'm talking about what the Bible calls sin, "...the condition of death that is on me because I have yet to receive Jesus Christ. I am bound for death, I am bound for hell, and I'm bound for separation from God." Why? "...Because I have never received the grace that God extended to the world through his Son Jesus Christ."

Have you guys ever heard of Stockholm syndrome? It was diagnosed for the first time in 1973. There was a failed bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden. Eight people were taken captive for five days, as the person who tried to rob the bank negotiated with the police and the authorities and this sort of thing. Eventually, all eight of the hostages were rescued. Once this person was arrested, do you know what happened? It was the oddest thing. Instead of these eight people crying out for this person to be punished, they started to stand up for him. "No, he doesn't deserve justice. He was just trying to help his family out." They start defending him apart from justice. Why? Because there is something weird within us that even when we know that things are bad for us and things are against us, we still have this weird loyalty to them. Some of us in this room, do you know why we struggle with receiving the ransom that has been paid for our lives? We have Stockholm syndrome toward the world and our sin. You still love it. In fact, some of us love it more than we love Jesus, if we are just being real honest. We think about it. Our mind wanders off to that thing that we know that we shouldn't want... but man, we want it. What Peter says is this: "Look, you have been bought with a price. You have been saved by a benefactor whom you could not call, a price was paid that you could not afford, a life was given that you could not have imagined, and it was given by Jesus. So therefore, receive that life. Be aware of and know the ransom that has been given for you. The attitude that we have is hope on the grace. The action is holiness and the how is the ransom of the cross of Jesus Christ. It will never come because I'm good enough, because I'm clever enough, or because I'm able to do things. It will never happen. It only happens because of what God does through Jesus.

#### **4. Through the Word. (v. 25)**

So how do I know this? Well he gets to the end of the passage, and he says in verse 23, that "We know all of this *'...since you have been born again, not of a perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God.'*" Look at verse 25: "*The Word of the Lord remains forever.*" The flowers fade and the grass withers, but the Word of the Lord remains forever. "*...And this Word is the Good News...*" (the Gospel) "*... that was preached to you.*" This is what I want us to hear today: Grace and holiness and ransom are timeless things because they come from an imperishable seed. What does that mean? They come from the Word of God. Do you want to know why we always preach from the Bible and why we always teach the Bible in Bible studies? Because we know that the Word of God always preaches the Gospel; it always tells us the Good News. On every page you can find the Good News. What is the Gospel? The Gospel is Jesus. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ loved you, pursued you, died for you, rose again and conquered death through his resurrection so that you could be brought into life and fellowship with God. That is the Gospel. Jesus is the Gospel. Whenever the Bible reaches this point and people turn away, Jesus looks at the Twelve and He says, "Do you want to leave too?" And Peter says, "Where else would we go, Lord? You alone have the Words of Life." John 1 says that Jesus is the Word made flesh. What is the point? The Word of God is the Gospel and the Gospel is Jesus. This is the thing. All through the Bible, everywhere you turn and everywhere you read, we keep running back into glorious, beautiful, powerful, magnificent, cannot be understood or fathomed or superseded, Jesus Christ. He is it. So I kind of get to the end of this, and I think that I just need to say this: "Some of us have become bored or complacent with Jesus Christ because we don't really know who He is." I am telling you He is the timeless, impossible to completely fathom Word of God. His Way is beyond our way. It is the perfect and beautiful Way, and it cannot be completely understood but it can be obeyed. If you want to have the life that God

has intended for you, it comes when you receive the grace that came through Jesus. You set your hope on that grace. It comes whenever you obey in holiness, the holiness that comes not because I am trying to make God happy but because I'm responding to that grace. That only comes through Jesus, whenever I receive the ransom, the ransom that can only come through Jesus. Are you getting the point? It's all about Him. It's all about Him. Everything flows from Him; everything is intended to be reconciled back to Him. This is the point. I think that some of us, for whatever reason, have yet to say "Yes" to Him.

I've got to a point in my life now where every movie that I watch, every book I read, every meal that I eat, I can find some sort of way to see Jesus in that. That's weird. It kind of is... you're right. But you know what? It's because once the Gospel invades your heart and takes over in your mind, you see it everywhere. You see it everywhere, and you start to go, "The sunshine and the breeze is a gracious gift of God. Thank you God for the breeze. Ooh, I love the thunderstorm; it's a great gift from God." Whatever is happening, you say, "This is all grace." You come to a point where you say, "Anything this side of hell is a gracious gift of God. Thank you God." (Clapping) ...and that is change. So this is how we are going to end today, and this is how we are going to respond. I want us to reach a point where we say, "Do you know what I need to do right now? I need to say 'Yes' to Jesus"... whatever that means for you. For some of you, it's, "I need to receive grace." For some of us, it's "I need to stop trying to set my hope on other things or to love things more than the ransom that has been paid me." We need to just respond and say "Yes" to what Christ has done, who He is, and what He desires for us. That's my prayer for us in this place. Let's pray together.

"God, You are so good, and Father everything that You give us is beautiful. We may not understand that it is beautiful, but it is beautiful because God You allow it and use it to conform us into the image of your Son. Even the ugly painful things are beautiful because they are used as tools of your grace. So Father, right now we say 'Yes' to those things. God, we say, 'We want to be conformed to the image of your Son Jesus, even though it's not easy... even though it's hard, we say "Yes" to it.' God help us to be mature. We don't want to be immature any longer. We don't want to believe that life is supposed to be easy. We want to believe that even in the midst of the pain, You are still on your throne. So Lord, we reach a point now where we come and we sing to you and respond to you. We pray this is the name of your Son who is worth it all, Jesus Christ. Amen."