

**1 Peter**  
**Part Two: Perfectly Secure**  
**Pastor Rick Henderson**      **February 11-12, 2023**

Welcome back to week 2 of a new series through 1 Peter. If you missed last week, I'm asking you to take some time this week to watch that message. Each week will build on the last and I don't want you to miss out.

In this series, we are talking a lot about identity. Who likes taking personality tests and strength profiles? Are you into that? People who geek out on this stuff often like digging into the differences between extroverts and introverts. Who are my extroverts out there? Who are the introverts? If you noticed someone who didn't raise their hand, they're an introvert. That's just how we roll sometimes.

I'm an introvert. That means I've got introvert problems.



**Introvert Problems**  
@IntrovertProbss



If I was accidentally weird to you once just know I will be thinking about it every night for the next 20 years

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All right introverts, be bold. Is this true? I can describe, in vivid detail, obscure, awkward introvert moments from years ago. And it's not just that I can describe them. When I think about them, I still feel all the feelings I had in the moment.

Since we are talking about identity, we have to talk about our sense of self. This is my question to help us go there today.

**QUESTION:** What is an achievement that could cause you to feel better about yourself? And what is a failure that could cause you to feel worse about yourself?

**Take a second and write down an answer.**

I don't have to know you and I don't have to know what you wrote down to know what your answer is. I bet your answer is the same as my answer and everyone's answer.

**ANSWER:** Anything that impacts our **SIGNIFICANCE, SECURITY, or SATISFACTION.**

As I read our passage for today, I want you to listen keenly for things that relate to our significance, security, and satisfaction.

**1 PETER 1:3-9** *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, and into an **inheritance** that can **never perish, spoil or fade**. This **inheritance is kept in heaven for you**, 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. **In all this you greatly rejoice**, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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. 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**, for **you are receiving** the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

In every sphere of life, in every arena of life—you earn your identity. Whether good or bad, people treat identity like it's earned. It just makes sense, right? What is your professional identity? You earned that. Whatever benefits come with that, you earn them. But when it comes to our identity in Jesus, and the benefits that come with it—0% is based on what we did, do, or might do.

**IDENTITY:** I find joy in defining myself by what Jesus did, not what I do.  
*What is the story I'm telling myself about myself?*

Are you able to relax in the fact that your status and your inheritance are not at all based on your moral or religious performance? Remember who wrote this. It was Peter, a man who learned the truth of this the hard way. Let's take a quick tour of some of the regrettable scenes from his wobbly devotion to Jesus.

In John 18, you can read about when Jesus and the disciples were in the Garden on Jesus' last night of freedom. Soldiers and Pharisees came to arrest Jesus. In a shocking display of power, Jesus said, "I am he." And all the soldiers fell to the ground. Even after Jesus proved his power, what did Peter do? He pulled out a sword and swung wildly at a soldier, cutting off a chunk of the man's ear.

If Jesus' power was so obvious, why did Peter feel the need to get violent? Clearly, it was not fear for his physical safety. When stressed, when under duress, he went back to trusting in himself instead of trusting in Jesus.

It's possible to **love** Jesus while being **unloving**. How do we explain this? This is what happens in the life of a believer who stops trusting Jesus and instead looks to something else for significance, security, or satisfaction.

Just a little bit later that same night, there is another moment where Peter failed to stand fast. In Luke 22, we read that Peter denied that he was a disciple of Jesus. How many times did he deny that he even

knew Jesus? Three times. When stressed, when under duress, he went back to trusting in himself instead of trusting in Jesus.

It's possible to **identify** with Jesus and **deny** Jesus. How do we explain this? This is what happens in the life of a believer who stops trusting Jesus and instead looks to something else for significance, security, or satisfaction.

In Galatians 2, we read about a time that Peter was getting pressure from certain Jewish Christians. Again, he did not stand fast. He gave into their pressure and distanced himself from Gentile believers. In a church gathering, he willfully participated in racial segregation and racist discrimination. When stressed, when under duress, he went back to trusting in himself instead of trusting in Jesus.

It's possible to be a **united** people in Jesus but live like a **divided** people. He was a mature follower of Jesus and a leader in the church! How do we explain this? This is what can happen in the life of any believer. This can happen to any believer who stops trusting Jesus and instead looks to something else for significance, security, or satisfaction.

With his story in view, look again at the audacious, radical, stunning claim about what the true grace of God is.

**1 PETER 1:5** *This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 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.*

If you are in Christ, there is nothing that can take this precious inheritance from you. Not even your own sin, not even humiliating, public moral failure can cause you to lose it. That's how secure you are in Jesus. Do you believe that?

The **STRENGTH** of our faith is far less important than the **OBJECT** of our faith.

Do you know and do you believe that weak faith in something strong is always better than strong faith in something weak? What we are talking about is not dependent on the strength of our faith, but the object of our faith.

Tullian is a friend of mine. He and I became friends after his life crashed and burned. If you don't know him, he is a grandson of Billy Graham. He was a prominent pastor, best-selling author, and nationally sought-after speaker. If he were here today, he would straight up tell you that he blew all of that up with a series of his own devastating moral choices. Those choices wrecked his family, hurt many others, and even drove him to the point of suicide.

What saved him from ending it all and instead choosing repentance and walking the road of reconciliation can be summed up in a single word. It was the **gospel**. Just like Peter knew very public moral failure, and yet continued to point to the goodness of Jesus and what we have in him—Tullian is doing the same. In shame-defying joy, he shares this.

*You are NOT defined by your worst moments or your greatest accomplishments; your wins or your losses; your strengths or your weaknesses. God defines you. And his definition for you is "Beloved."* —**Tullian Tchividjian**

**Are you ready for some real talk?** In my experience, it's not the people who have failed publicly who have the hardest time accepting this. My experience is that the people who have the hardest time embracing and celebrating this:

- It's not the ones who just got out of prison.
- It's not the ones who are in a facility or working in a program to overcome addiction.
- It's not the ones who regularly attend Celebrate Recovery.

This is hardest for the people who look like they have it all together. This is hardest for the folks who are seen as successes and as significant because of their accomplishments and public reputation. With a heart full of love and gentleness, would you let me preach the gospel to you?

If there is any accomplishment that could make you feel better about yourself, **OR**, if there is any failure that could make you feel worse about yourself—you are trusting something other than Jesus for your SIGNIFICANCE, SECURITY, or SATISFACTION. Please hear me. Please lean in. It is right and good to celebrate successes. It is right and good to grieve our sins, to lament our moral failures. It is anti-gospel to let either successes or failures change our sense of significance. If you have trusted in Jesus, you are defined by what he did, not what you do.

How do you know if I'm talking to you? **Are you ready?** You won't talk to other people about your sins and your struggles. We all are vulnerable to trusting something other than Jesus for our SIGNIFICANCE and SECURITY. What's your story?

**IDENTITY:** I find joy in defining myself by what Jesus did, not what I do.

*What is the story I'm telling myself about myself?*

Sometimes it's our embarrassment and feelings of shame that can cause us to doubt our significance and security in Jesus. Sometimes it's not that at all. Maybe it's the severity of our circumstances that opens the door to doubt. I think Peter was writing to people who were experiencing both of those things. He wrote to men and women who never knew when the next abuse or mistreatment would come. They just knew it would happen because their communities were openly hostile to their faith. And yet, they were already discovering joy in what Peter had to learn the hard way.

**1 PETER 1:6-7** *In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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.*

If you are in a small group, you will talk about this this week. How should we understand the phrase, "you may have had to suffer"? Some say God obviously planned for the suffering to happen. Others say the kind of circumstances they were in naturally necessitated having to face abuse. Which is it? I'm not sure that we get to know unless God makes it crystal clear. Are there times when God intentionally plans suffering? Absolutely! The cross is an example of that.

Does every event of suffering mean that God intentionally planned for that to happen? I don't think so. My best understanding of Scripture is that there are times God intentionally plans suffering, and there are times when he allows it. But that's not really what's important. Here's what is important. What purpose does he have for us when we experience suffering?

Whatever **PRODUCED** our suffering isn't as important as the **PURPOSE** of our suffering.

Peter doesn't offer clarity about the cause. He gives clarity about the purpose. So, let me share with you a question that I've been asking myself. I'll warn you upfront. It's a hard question. This question makes me flinch. Am I willing for Jesus to display his glory against the backdrop of my pain? Am I willing for Jesus to display his glory against the backdrop of my difficult, painful, grief-stricken circumstances? Are you willing to get honest with that question? Can I suggest to you, that the way I answer that question and the way that you answer that question has a lot to say about where we find:

SIGNIFICANCE  
SECURITY  
SATISFACTION

When I lived in and pastored in Utah, I was always in the religious minority. Less than 2% of the state of Utah were Bible-only-Christians. To put that in perspective, Japan has a higher percentage of evangelical Christians. So does India. In our church, there were people who had stories of real suffering and persecution because their faith was different from the dominant religion of the state.

In our small groups one week, we asked this question, "What has it cost you to follow Jesus?" A man frankly stated, it cost me my wife and \$1m. In Utah, it wasn't out of the norm for someone to be divorced because they left the dominant religion to follow Jesus. For this man, his dad also wrote him out of the family business. He lost his wife and \$1m. And yet, he stood with Peter and countless other believers who say—there is far more joy in Jesus than in what I lost to follow Jesus.

As I've been preparing for this series, I've benefited from the work of Karen Jobes. She is a brilliant biblical scholar and author. She comforts us with this.

*Christians can bear any disadvantage now because of the certainty of their eternal inheritance. —Karen H. Jobes*

I don't know that I'm smart enough to explain why. There is something about standing fast in the true grace of God, in times of adversity, that helps other people see it more clearly. It draws people to Jesus. There is a better kingdom to live for than our own. That's what could be seen in the lives of the men and women who received this letter.

**1 PETER 1:8-9** *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, **for you are receiving** the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

What does that mean, "you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls?" If I believe in Jesus, am I or am I not saved? Which is it? To answer that question, we need to do a little Theology 101.

#### **THEOLOGY 101:**

- We **ARE** saved. The word for this is justification. When we give our allegiance to Jesus, we are saved. We are forgiven and God sees us as righteous and holy. That's what justification means.

- We **ARE BEING** saved. The word for this is sanctification. This is the process of the Holy Spirit working in us and with us so that our thinking, our affections, and our behavior aligns with our status of being holy and righteous. That is what sanctification means.
- We **WILL BE** saved. The word for this is glorification. When we are finally with Jesus, we will be totally free from sin and death. We will have new bodies and all of creation will be fully restored. That is what glorification means.

This is why this brings encouragement to stand fast in the true grace of God. That inheritance is certain. All that we have and will have in Jesus is perfectly secure by him. Last week I encouraged you to check out the Bible Project. Become students of the Old Testament. Everything in the Old Testament points to what we are talking about.

**1 PETER 1:10-12** *Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.*

This was the point he made. Everything we have in Christ is everything that all of human history has been waiting for. It is what prophets pointed to. And it may sound strange to some of us, but even angels long to research this! Would you make note of this?

God's message never **CHANGED**. It continued and **CULMINATED** in Jesus.

Let's take a quick second to highlight Peter's statement about angels longing to look into these things. I don't think he was taking poetic license. I don't think it was fluff or hyperbole. What we have is precious. The gospel is a treasure. It can only be found in God's revealed word. Once that dawns on us, we will never have a casual relationship with the Bible again.

**1 PETER 1:13-16** *Therefore,*

When you see a therefore, what do we ask? What is it there for? Now, based on all that Peter has written thus far—this should be our response.

*with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. **As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."***

At the top of chapter 1, Peter wrote that we are chosen, that the Holy Spirit is working in us, and the point is to be obedient to Jesus. Here again, towards the end of chapter 1, he repeats himself. We are to be obedient. Because we are in him, we have his status of being holy. And because he is holy, our thinking, our affections, and our lifestyles should continually progress to match and be aligned with that status of holiness.

There might be confusion here. How do we reconcile Peter's major sins and being totally secure in Christ? I talked about my friend Tullian. No matter what your worst moment is, or my worst moment is--if we have trusted in Jesus, we are totally secure—even if our worst moral mistakes come after faith in Jesus. That's how secure we are. But, does that contradict this command to be holy?

Maybe this will help. The late Dallas Willard once said, "Grace is opposed to earning. It's not opposed to effort." We cannot effort our way to grace. But once we have been given this true grace of God, it is right and good for us to invest effort into understanding, obeying, and taking our next steps of growth.

Because Peter emphasizes our identity in Jesus, we are emphasizing our identity in Jesus. But that is only and always in the context of Jesus being our authority.

**AUTHORITY:** I find joy in submitting to Jesus and his word.  
*Who is in charge?*

What does submission to Jesus and his word look like?

**1 PETER 1:22** *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have **sincere love** for each other, **love one another deeply, from the heart.***

Last year, Heather and I were invited to have lunch with a small group from our church. This group had been together for many years. They'd been together for decades. I knew a couple of the people in this group, but I didn't know everyone. Heather and I were expecting a nice lunch and a chance to get to know them better. What we got, I never saw coming.

As we sat around the lunch table, they told stories about their lives. There were high points and there were low points. There was a lot of laughter. There was deep, deep affection for each other. There were tears. They were a group of people who lived life together. They had each other's backs. As we listened, it became obvious that they knew this.

I want you to have that. I want us to have this. Some of us are experiencing this and some of us aren't yet. If you're holding back or if you don't believe it's possible—no one here is going to force you. We don't push; we invite. My invitation to you, if you are not in a small group, is to get in one. And for those of you who are in a small group, don't wait for it to accidentally happen. Be intentional. Love each other deeply from the heart.

I want to remind you of our series thesis.

**SERIES THESIS:** Let your **IDENTITY** drive your **ACTIVITY**.

We have a brand new, God-given identity in Jesus. And, we have a God-given purpose. It's when we know who we are, that we know what we should be doing. This is how our church has committed to talking about the **ACTIVITY** of our lives.

**ACTIVITY:** I find joy in loving others the way Jesus loved me.  
*What does love require of me?*

What does love require of you and of me? We will take a deeper dive into that next week, as we transition into chapter 2. Between now and then, I want to read you this. It comes from the Apostle Paul. This is part of a letter that he wrote to a local church that needed some clarity and who needed some juice. They were on the struggle bus when it came to love. So, this is what he wrote.

**1 CORINTHIANS 13:18a** *If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

We aren't the first people to elevate religious activity over love.

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*