

# A Life Worth Living

*With Special Guest David Delk, President and Co-CEO of Man in the Mirror*

*1 Peter 1:1-2*

I want to give a special welcome to Pastor McClain. Would you mind standing up and if you could give him a little welcome this morning? Pastors working to ignite a movement in the Pine Hills community, that's what this flyer is about and Pat Morley is going to be speaking at an event they are hosting on October 12 at Evan High School, which is the high school that Pat had attended. So there's a team of folks that are working on this event and on this movement. They meet every Saturday at noon at the Orlando Soul Restaurant on Kirkman Road. Pat Morley is part of that, Pastor McClain is part of that, so if you would like to get involved and help ignite this movement, and they would love to have you join them. Just talk to Pastor McClain after the meeting today and be aware of the event as well, you may want to be a part of that.

Well good morning men! Pat's not here today, but he told me that you guys have been getting a little out of hand, so I decided to bring something to help maintain control today. You guys are a little unruly, especially this table over here, I can tell that's a bunch of trouble makers. Last week I had a real privilege, I had a chance to meet with a gentlemen, I'll call him "Ted," in another city. Ted is at the pinnacle of his career. He is 56 I believe. The last 15 or 20 years he kind of hooked his star to some key wagons in the city if that makes sense, and he got opportunities which spiraled into new opportunities and he became the trusted go to guy for some of the very key influencers in the city. Now he is involved in leading probably the largest project in the history of that city, and he's completely miserable! I sat there for about an hour and 15 minutes and listened to him talk about his life and everything that's happened, and he feels incredibly blessed and very fortunate. He knows how lucky he is in many ways, but at the same time, as all these good things started to happen, he and his wife moved to a nicer neighborhood on a golf course. It was too far from friends and too far from church, and he's drifted away from that and his wife now. The pressure of the guys he's working with, the expectations, and the scope of this project is probably 50 times bigger than anything he ever dreamed he was going to be working on. Multiple years, huge amounts of money, thousands and thousands of decisions and people involved, and he is completely miserable. It's just a fascinating thing; it's like the dog that catches the car, what do you do now?

That's how he feels, and it's interesting because there are so many guys in our culture today that are asking deep questions that they really don't know the answers to. They're asking questions like is my life random? Am I my own? Will I ever get better? Can I ever be the man that I want to be? What's the point? I think that last one was what Ted was experiencing, he had gotten to this place where the things that he thought would have made him incredibly happy as a 25, 35, or maybe even as a 45 year old, he's got them, and he's saying what's the point? What's it all about?

Well this morning we're going to look at 1 Peter 1, if you have your Bibles you may want to turn there, and we're going to look at just 2 verses as Peter kind of establishes the ground work for who we are and what God has done. If we're going to have a life worth living, it's only going to come as we are grounded in the reality of what God has done for us. So let's look at this passage together, 1 Peter 1:1-2:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

May God add understanding to the reading of his holy word.

### **Aliens and Dispersion**

So Peter begins this passage, his letter, with this incredibly dense greeting that he gives to the folks he's writing to. Now, who's he writing to? He's writing to Christians that are scattered around these different provinces of Asia Minor. By this time the Jews are scattered around the world, the Christians are scattered as minorities in all these communities, there's persecution of various kinds that are taking place that you'll see later on in the book of Peter. He is directing his letter to guys who are kind of outsiders, if you will. People who don't really fit in, and that's what he says here, he describes them. They are exiles of the dispersion. So when he says exiles, that's the same as the word alien, and it's a Greek term that means non-citizen, which came from then if you remember the whole concept of a city state and the Greek beginnings of democracy. To be a member of the city state, to be a citizen, was a huge deal! As a matter of fact, one of the things you probably remember that Paul did during his trials was he appealed to his Roman citizenship, and as soon as he let people know he was a Roman citizen, everything changed because he had all of these rights that he would not have had if he was not a citizen.

The same thing is true here in the language that Peter is using. What he's saying here is that you are people who are never really going to fit in. You know I have a friend that's an immigrant to the United States and he finally has his citizenship now, but for a long time he didn't, and there were all kinds of times when it came up that he wasn't really a citizen of the United States. It would be these strange things, like he might be applying for something, or he'd get word that he hadn't filled out some forms. All kinds of things that would come up, and it was just this constant reminder that he didn't really fit in. What Peter is saying here is that's how are lives are going to be here in this world, because we don't fit into this world that we're involved in anymore. This is a world that's been influenced by sin, by the wildness of the Devil, the lust of the flesh, the natural man has created a culture and we're no longer going to fit in that culture.

He also uses this word, dispersion. Remember Peter is talking to these Christians that are scattered around, some of them are Jewish, most of them are probably Gentiles. So he is going to ground his discussion not only in Greek ideas, but also in Hebrew ideas because he wants to connect with those Jewish Christians as well as connecting these Gentile Christians to the teachings of the Old Testament. So he uses this word dispersion, and this word dispersion is used in the Old Testament. You may also have heard diaspora, which means the scattering of the Jews, and this first took place when the Babylonians and the Syrians took over the Promised Land in the Old Testament and took the exiles back to their countries. So all throughout the Old Testament there's probably 10 or 12 references to this where the people of God are scattered away from the Promised Land. To understand how important that is, you have to remember what land is like. How many of you have some property that's been in your family a long time? There's something special about going to that place isn't there? You get there and just the memories and some of the buildings might be old, and there's pictures. I know we have some property in South Carolina, and there's a section of that where I can stand under a beam and I know that my Great Grandfather put that beam there in 1907. A portion of that house is still there after

all these years! And so when we go back to that place, there's just something about it, you feel a connection there. That is just a small taste of what the idea of the land was supposed to be in the Old Testament. In many ways the Promised Land is like the replacement, it's like the new Garden of Eden. Remember in the Garden of Eden that all the needs of Adam and Eve were taken care of. Think about food, all the food was just there for them. So now in the fall you have to work by the sweat of your brow to get food.

Some of you guys have been working hard this week, it's been painful. You've got some things that aren't going all that well, that's the fall! But think about how the Promised Land is described in the Old Testament, it's a land flowing with milk and honey. It's a restoration of that garden; it's a restoration of that perfection, that rest that we all long for as men. That's what the Promised Land represented in the Old Testament. Now of course, they never really got there, there was never really a fulfillment of that, but that was the promise. So when they are dispersed away from the Promised Land, they are thrown back into this alien world where everything's hard. People are against them, they're enduring all the effects of the fall, and they have to struggle. So when Peter uses this language here, that's what he's communicating to his readers. Listen:

You are going to struggle in this world. This world is not your home yet, you're not in that final blessed Promised Land. You're not in the new heavens and the new earth. All of us feel this way to a certain extent. Every one of you guys here, you probably have a nagging sense that this world is not your home, that something in your life is not the way it's supposed to be. I know last night my wife and I were talking, and I thought I said one thing, and she heard something completely different. I know that's never happened to you guys, I know that I'm the only one that's ever had that experience, but last night... It was the most obvious misunderstanding you've ever seen in your life, and boom, there it goes. I'm like what in the world!? I have enough trouble when I actually try to do something wrong, and here I am trying to do the right thing and I'm getting in trouble! What's the problem? Why? Because this world's not our home.

Some of you guys here are like Ted this morning, you're barely hanging on by your fingernails. It may be in your work life, it may be in relationships, it may be that you've isolated yourself; you're feeling stress and pressure, and you don't see a way out, you don't see a way through. Well Peter here is going to ground us, to show us how to live as exiles, as aliens, as strangers, in this dispersion. So let's look and see what Peter says about the knowledge about what God has done for us as men who are in Christ. I want you to imagine a guy, a young man. He's maybe a late teenager and they find him wondering around in downtown Orlando. He's dirty, very gaunt. If you ask him what's going on he says he doesn't really remember anything, but he thinks he's an orphan. He's been living on the streets for months, eating out of dumpsters, taking handouts, sleeping in alley ways and under bridges. So they begin to do some investigation and they find out actually he's not an orphan. He's the son of multimillionaires who've been desperately looking for him, who have a beautiful home, a big huge family and everybody loves him and can't wait for him to get back to be part of that family. We often live like that young man. We forget who we are and we forget what God has done. We go digging around in dumpsters, sleeping on the streets, because we forgot that we actually have this incredible blessing and this incredible life in the family of God.

Peter reminds us of that by showing us how God works in our lives and what he does for us. People talk about the trinity and the fact that the doctrine of the trinity is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but here's one of the places where we see it as clear as anywhere. Peter's going to tell us what the Father does, he's going to tell us what the Spirit does, and he's going to tell us what Jesus does for us in this

passage. Look at these three truths that he lays out. The first thing that he says is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. What does that mean? Foreknowledge is more than just knowing something ahead of time, foreknowledge implies a covenant love, a knowing in the Bible means more. In the King James Version, it says Adam knew Eve, that doesn't just mean oh that's Eve, it means a lot more than that if you know what I'm saying. So Adam knew Eve, and they had children, so when the Bible talks about the foreknowledge of God, what he means is setting his affections on us beforehand, choosing us beforehand, ordaining beforehand. So what Peter is saying here is the Father knows you, he knows you right in the midst of what you're going through, and he loves you right in the midst of it. Life is not random! God knows about this, this is not some surprise to him. He's not confused, and he loves you right in the midst of what you're dealing with.

The second thing he says to us is the sanctification of the Spirit. This sanctification idea is originally a setting apart, because the idea was that you had things you used every day for common use, and then you had things that you set apart for special use, particularly in religious ceremonies and things like that. So the idea is holiness, that the Spirit is making us holy, that the Spirit has set us apart for God, is transforming us and making us into the men that he wants us to be. A lot of guys ask the question, can I get better? Some of us have struggled with things for years, we have things in our personalities or things that were shaped as children that maybe our parents did or didn't do, so we have these reflex reactions to things, this default perspective we bring. Maybe we're quick to get angry or to judge others; maybe we have a hard time forgiving somebody who hurts us. Whatever it is and we think man this is just going on and on, is it ever going to change? Am I ever going to get better? Peter says that the Spirit is transforming us, that the Spirit is setting us apart, that he is the one who is making us holy, that he is the one who's making me into the man that God wants me to be.

The third thing it says here is for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. Sprinkling with his blood, that's the Old Testament allusion to being cleansed, so we are cleansed by the work of Christ, but we're also cleansed so that we can obey him. Why has the Father loved us? Why is the Spirit transforming us? So that we are cleansed by the work of Christ, but also so that we can live a life worthy of Christ, and so that we can live life like Christ. Peter is saying that here you are in this alien country, you're a stranger in a strange land, but God has given you everything you need. It's sort of like being dropped down into enemy territory, but when we drop down into enemy territory we're not standing there naked with a knife in our teeth like Rambo. We're dressed in this robotic armor that repels everything! We can fly over mountains and we can shoot people from a mile away, all this kind of stuff because God has prepared us. God has given us everything we need to be able to live in the place he has placed us.

### **Grace and Peace**

So life has incredible meaning! Every interaction we have is purposeful because we are God's anointed agents in this place. I was with a gentleman in a restaurant and after we finished, we had a brief prayer time. This woman, not the waitress but somebody who was cleaning tables, came over and in a very genuine way she said I really appreciate your prayer. I would love it if you guys would pray for me; she said we just found out yesterday my husband's mother died in California, and the day before that my uncle died. We're trying to be a part of doing all the stuff that needs to get done. We have no idea how my husband's going to get to California, and it's just been a really hard day. I had no choice; I had to come to work. So we stopped and prayed for her, and this gentleman I was with, I don't know what it was, but after we prayed he gave her something from his wallet and he said, this is because Jesus Christ

loves me and Jesus Christ really loves you. She took that, and before she even looked at it, she just broke down in tears, and she had to walk away from us, she was so overcome.

Every interaction we have is a chance to be a subversive, to be a revolutionary in this world that we are strangers in. That's the opportunity that Christ gives us as his missionaries, as his warriors in this land, and he equips us to do that because of what the Father has done for us, because of what the Spirit is doing for us, and because of what Jesus has done for us. Peter says, look when this has happened you're going to get some benefits from this. You're going to have a new reality in your life, and the first thing he tells us is that it leads to grace. Look at the end of verse 2, he says may grace and peace be multiplied to you. This word grace is a fairly unique word to the New Testament as a greeting, and it is kind of a play on words because it is the word charis. The typical Greek greeting if you read letters from those days would have been chareign which means rejoice, greetings, hello. So in the Bible, in the letters, they took that chareign, and instead of saying hello, greetings, or rejoice, they changed it to charis, grace, which means an undeserved gift, unmerited favor. What Peter is saying, and what Paul is saying when he uses the same terminology, is the basic reality of our lives is that we have gotten something that we didn't deserve, and this is a new reality based on what God has done in our lives.

The second thing that he says is that we have peace, may grace and peace be multiplied to you. Again, pulling that Hebrew theme in, now we have the idea of shalom. This is in the Greek version of the Old Testament, and this is the word here that's used to translate that word, shalom. Much like the land has this really rich meaning in the Old Testament, the idea of peace has this really rich meaning there too, because in the fall what you have is a breaking of peace, a breaking of shalom. Adam and Eve no longer have perfect intimacy with one another, there's now conflict between them, there's conflict between their children. What's the next story after the fall? Cain and Abel. So this brokenness enters into the world of human relationships, and not only that but now they have a brokenness in their relationship with God, they feel shame when he comes around. Then they're cast out of the place of communion with God where the perfect Sabbath, the perfect peace, the perfect rest was. They're cast out of that and it's guarded by an angel with a sword. So this peace is broken, this shalom doesn't exist anymore.

What Peter is saying is that we are entering back into that peace that God offers because of what Christ has done for us. We don't experience that perfectly, everybody here has got stresses in their lives, things that are going crazy and that we don't know how they're going to work, but we can experience that peace that ultimately will be a reality in the new heavens and the new earth. Peter starts this letter with the foundation because he knows that folks are going through a hard time. He knows that these guys are struggling, so he wants to lay out for them at the very beginning of this letter that this is the new reality, this is who you are.

So my question to you today is this, are you living this new reality? Is this what's dominating your heart and mind? Where do you need grace and peace today? Some of you guys may need it in your marriage, some of you maybe have been married 40 years but you find out you're living more like roommates, and frankly you're not treating your wife all that well. Maybe God's calling you today to be a husband in the light of this new reality of what he's done for you in Christ? Some of you with family, maybe your kids have drifted away, or maybe your grandkids are so busy that it seems they don't want to talk to me; they don't have time for me. You've sort have given up. That's not what God calls us to do in this new reality. He wants us to reflect the grace and the love that he's given to us into the lives of others, and we have to do that intentionally, we have to do that in spite of the response we get. Some of you need a renewed commitment in those areas. Maybe it's in friendships. I know it's hard for me, you get so busy, so many things going on, you've got kids' schedules, you've got responsibilities at church, you've got all

the work projects you're doing, traveling to other places, and you're just like I don't have time for friendships! It's too much trouble! The problem is in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, you find yourself sitting there like Ted. You wonder why it's so lonely, you wonder why it feels overwhelming, and it's because you don't have anybody in your corner. God did not make us to live alone; he made us to live in community with friends who can be in the battle with us. This is part of our new reality, and some of you today need to recognize that you're headed down a path in relationships that's going to lead you to a place that you don't really want to be.

Maybe it's in areas of temptation. Some of you guys maybe have allowed yourself to be a little seduced by some of the temptations of this world, and today is the time you need to step back and say wait a minute, what in the world am I thinking? What have I been doing? This is not who I am! This doesn't reflect what God's done for me! So the Big Idea for this morning is that **God has done His part. Your part is to believe Him.** Jesus says in the book of John that my work is to believe the one who sent me, and that's our work to. So how do we cultivate this life of belief? We can't change our own hearts; we can't make ourselves a better person. How does this happen? It happens when we look to Christ, when we look to the Father, when we remember what he's done, when we take a look at what Peter says here and realize this is the new reality. This is what I need to believe. The problem is there are all kinds of things that end up being distractions to us.

### **Getting "Un-Dizzy"**

How many have you have seen the game, and I was going to do this today but then I remembered I made Jim Seibert bleed here before. Am I the only speaker that's made someone bleed? Yeah, so I figured this is a little dangerous, maybe I shouldn't actually do this example here today. Some of you have worked with youth I'm sure, and you've seen the little game where you put your head down on the bat and you spin around and then you stand up and try to run over to another place. What happens? Guys can't walk straight because they're dizzy, they can't see the world right. Guess what? We get dizzy in this world; it's spinning our heads around all the time. It's telling us things that aren't true, it's giving us lies and those things are pointing us in the wrong direction. So we get off balance with all kinds of things that make us dizzy. Our hobbies can make us dizzy. A great example, sports. I was with a father, my son was doing some baseball things, and I was with another father whose son was doing it. We were talking a little bit, he's an acquaintance, and he's always wearing Miami Dolphins stuff. So I asked him about it and he literally described a religious commitment. Not in those terms, but he's driving to all the games, he's going to some of the away games, he's clearing his schedule, he wears the paraphernalia, he knows the roster, he knows the statistics and the choices they have to make, what hard games are going to be during the year and on and on. Now I'm a fan, I enjoy football, but let's think a little bit about perspective. What's happened? What's happened is he's gotten dizzy, that is way out of proportion to anything that that should mean in a man's life. So it could be our hobbies. It could be hunting, it could be golf, and it could be our work. If I just finish this project really well, I know it's going to be 9 months at 60-70 hours a week, but golly this is going to make my career! Or if I could just keep these sales up for 6 more months! I know I've got to work every weekend, I know I've got to make a bunch of calls, I know I've got to travel 3 weeks a month. If I can keep these sales up 6 more months, I'll be the salesman of the year! We get dizzy, and we no longer see things for what they are.

Some of us want control as men. I want things my way, I want them to follow my agenda, and so I've got to set everything up in my family life so that we're always on time, and so that we work the plan. I need that in my work life, everybody has to respond the way I want them to, nobody can cut me off in traffic, because I've got to get my way! We're getting dizzy. It may be security and comfort. We're so cautious;

we've got 800 years of savings in the bank and insurance enough to last 25 life times, security on our houses with alarm systems and 42 airbags in our car, and on and on. Why? Nothing bad can happen to me? We're dizzy. Those are not where meaning comes from, those are not where purpose comes from, and what Peter is saying here is that we are grounded in a completely different reality. Nothing that is anchored in this world is ever going to satisfy our hearts because we're made for another world. That's what Peter is telling us in this passage.

Some of you may have done this in driver's Ed., it's kind of like these drunk goggles that they have. They have these goggles that distort reality and move things around, and you're supposed to put them on and try and drive a go-cart through the cones or whatever. You can't tell where they are because everything is messed up, everything has moved and this is supposed to simulate what it's like to be drunk. The reality is that what needs to happen in our lives is that we need to ask God to help us take off those goggles. We need to ask him to help us get un-dizzy. I told you about Ted; let me tell you about Louis. Pat and I had a chance to meet with Louis last week. Louis is the CEO of a fortune 500 company, been the CEO of several others. He had an emergency come up that derailed our meeting, but instead of just saying forget about it, he actually rescheduled some other stuff and fit in a meeting with us in the middle of the afternoon instead of the lunch time one we were supposed to have. We go in, we sit down in his office and he is 100% concerned about us, and you know this guy has got so much going on, you know he is so busy, and yet he has his eyes on us, listening, asking great questions, concerned personally about us. The contrast between Louis and Ted is amazing! Now Ted is a very nice man, but he is completely trapped, because he's not living out of who he is and what God has done. Louis is a man who knows who he is, he knows what God has done, and he's living out of that reality. So he is able to offer grace and peace to the people around him, because he's living out of the reality of what God has done for him. He knows who he is, he knows what God has done, and that's the most important reality about his life.

So I want you to try and get un-dizzy a little bit with me today. We're going to try to take those goggles off and talk about the reality. I'm going to say these phrases then I want you to repeat them:

I am known and loved (say that with me). The Holy Spirit is transforming me. My purpose is to glorify Christ.

Say it again, the whole thing:

I am known and loved. The Holy Spirit is transforming me. My purpose is to glorify Christ.

Okay, I know it's early, I know it's easier to mumble on Friday morning, but I want you to say this like you mean it! We're trying to get un-dizzy! We need to work hard if we're going to get un-dizzy, so say it like you mean it with me:

I am known and loved. The Holy Spirit is transforming me. My purpose is to glorify Christ.

Guys, God has an amazing calling on your life. You're going to see all kinds of people today and you may be the only man that they're going to interact with who really knows what it means to be a man. So my prayer for you and for myself is that we would turn away from these distractions that we would repent of these things that have captured our hearts and we would turn back to Christ, to see who he is, what he's done, and how we can live in the light of who we really are. Let's pray!

## **Closing Prayer**

God I thank you for your word today. I thank you for the reality of what Peter talks about and how we as men today are living as exiles, scattered. There are things about this world in which we are never going to fit in with. Lord, that hurts sometimes, we long to be included, we long to be successful, we long to be respected, and so we can get distracted, we can get dizzy with all this world offers. Lord, I just pray that you would today call us back to yourself. Lord, I confess that I often let idols take the place that you should have in my heart, and I pray for the men in this room. I know that many of them are bearing heavy burdens today. Some of them didn't even want to come and be a part of this Bible Study today, because they didn't want to fake it, they didn't want to pretend that everything was okay. Lord, I pray that even in the midst of those burdens that you would show us that you are with us, that you are a Father that loves us. Spirit, you are at work in our lives, you are transforming us, and Jesus you have cleansed us, you have freed us from any guilt, and you've called us to obey you, to live for your glory. Lord, because of that you bring grace and peace into our hearts and lives, so make us agents of grace and peace, so that after we experience that new reality, we can offer it to others, in a way that not only brings us joy and transforms the world but brings glory to you. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.