God's Kindness to You in Christ (Part 1)

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[0:00] If you would turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter. As we look to Peter's writings in our exposition this morning, exposition has the idea in sermon making and sermon delivery of exposing what is there or unpacking what is there in the way of the meaning and the meaning is derived from what the text says.

So we are concerned with what the Bible says and what the Bible means by what the Bible says, not what Jeff means by what Jeff says, but what Jesus means.
That's our concern this morning. Even as we read through this section of Scripture, I'd like to begin reading since we're still at the first part of chapter 2 in 1 Peter.
I'd like to begin reading in verse 1. We will be working our way down through verse 8, verses 4 through 8 in the text for this morning. Let's gather the context together.
Peter begins in verse 2, therefore, hearkening back up into the points that he's been making about God's word in the previous verses. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, which we said last time, these are all verses that attack the community, the social structure and koinonia or fellowship or closeness of a body of believers in a local church.
[1:42] Like newborn babies long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to your salvation. If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord and coming to him as to a living stone, which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For this is contained in Scripture. Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed.
Or put to shame. This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.
For they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.
Now, the title of the message for this morning is God's Kindness to You in Christ. God's Kindness to You in Christ. What is taking place as we enter into this particular section of Scripture from the Apostle Peter?
[3:25] Peter knows. Peter knows. He realizes. He's fully aware and informed of the reality that his readers are suffering great, great hardship because life is hard.

And they're pressing hard up against the matters and issues of life. Issues that would be very, very familiar to you in the course of your everyday life as just regular people earning your living, raising your families, and trying to go about the business of being faithful to your king.
Now, hardship is definitely a daily challenge, but these people have the added weight of persecution. Now, that is something that we really don't understand or know much about.
We may suffer here and there on occasion by people who ridicule or mock or just don't understand why it is that we give such loyalty, allegiance, and devotion to Jesus, why we move about the way that we do in our Christian lives, but on the whole, we have yet to know this kind of persecution, what they're facing now.
People in their world are becoming increasingly militant about Christianity. In fact, Nero, Emperor Nero's campaign against Christians is ramping up about this time in history, and it will soon spread across the entire Roman Empire.
[4:58] Peter and the Apostle Paul will both lose their lives under Nero. Paul will be beheaded, and tradition tells us that the Apostle Peter, under Nero's persecution, was crucified upside down.

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Many of the other apostles were also martyred about this time. James was killed with a spear, and on and on and on it goes. John was the only one that we know of that was not martyred during his lifetime.
He was exiled, but he was not killed, and he lived into old age. All of the other disciples and apostles were killed. Also, many, many believers.
Nero is that man who used to use Christians, dip them in tar, put a pike through them, and then pitch them into the hole in the ground and light them aflame, and they were the torches that lit the games that he would do during the night.
He was a sick, sadistic man. He is spreading his tyranny. He is spreading his terror across the land. Peter is writing to the people who are coming under this persecution.
[6:13] Most of Peter's readers, then, are refugees. That's something that we know about today. All you have to do is turn on the news, right? You can see the horror of what it means to have people drive you out of your cities, your towns, your villages, your homes, and all that's familiar to you.

And here we are in the dead of winter. Most of these people have fled religious persecution. And due to the widening rejection, Christians have had to flee from those native lands only to find themselves increasingly isolated and marginalized in society.
They're the outcasts. They're the foreigners. They're the aliens. They're the weird ones bringing their customs into our place. That's what they're having to deal with on top of everything else.
Now, folks, just to get you into the mood of why Peter's writing this and the desperate kind of situation that these people are feeling as they read this letter from this apostle, think about how events beyond your control, which force even minor changes in your routines, minor changes in your expectations, and how those minor, even minor things that are out of your control can negatively impact your morale and your attitudes in life and how quickly you can change from optimism and kind of a spring in your step to just being weighed down, having to get up every day and try to find a way to motivate yourself.
Now, just think, minor changes do that. Let me give you one. Gas prices. There are people across the sea whose children are being blown into fragments.
[8:15] And we complain because that war is driving up gas prices. Oh, I might not be able to buy my $6 latte at Starbucks Monday morning. This is where we live.

We don't know persecution. And I want to put us in the right frame of mind as we think about this. Now, as I say that, friends, never, ever will I stand in this pulpit and demean or diminish the suffering that you do experience and go through.
It's real. For me, too. I have it right now, currently, in my life. We all have something touching our lives at some level or another, and we understand that.
These people are experiencing something far beyond what we really understand. When these minor, even minor things come into our lives and disrupt our routines, we can struggle with it.
We struggle with our attitudes, even our spiritual attitudes toward the Lord. But think of this. Uncertainties, difficulties, fears, doubts.
[9:23] That's what's threatening to overwhelm Peter's readers and leave them in some type of a spiritual squalor of hopelessness. That's very palpable to these people.

It is where they live. Peter's answer is surprising. As he moves through the very beginnings of this letter, he comes to this section, and he announces to them, in the midst of all of this reality, God's answer for what they're dealing with.
And it's not an army coming to the rescue. It's not any major change in their circumstances. Surprisingly, the answer that Peter brings is God's kindness to them in Christ. That's what he wants them to grasp.
That's where he wants them to ground their hope, to put their minds and their hearts, to reflect on God's kindness to them in Christ.
[10:37] In chapter 2, verse 3, where we left off last time, he says this, If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

God's kindness is what Peter chooses to focus on as he offers these belabored brothers and sisters spiritual guidance through the fear, through the doubt, through the uncertainty, through the suffering, and then into the bright hope of God's goodness.

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Now, the question on my mind as I studied through this at this point, why God's kindness? Why did he go there? He's already said so many wonderful things to encourage these people, and now he highlights the kindness of the Lord to them to bolster their faith and to help them with their hope. Why kindness? Well, that's what we want to answer from Peter's letter this morning. So let me ask you, are you suffering? Are you suffering, friends?
Are you facing uncertainty? Struggling with doubt? Struggling with fear? Struggling with worry, anxiety, pressure? Are you seeking to be faithful and finding it a struggle?
[12:08] Folks, we experience life's hardships at varying levels of intensity, don't we? And we experience responses to God of faithfulness at various levels.

I know we can argue we're either being faithful or we're not. But in the struggles of life, as we move into these circumstances and try to do it with a heart and a mind for the Lord, we can sometimes struggle with our faithfulness being something that is consistent or bold.
We struggle with wisdom. Right? Doesn't life have a way of making it difficult for you to see your way through?
It's hard in the moment because of emotion or whatever going on to say, am I making the right decision? Is this right? Hon, what do you think? Or pastor, what do you think?
Or friend, what do you think? It's tough, isn't it? Different responses. Different levels. For some, it might be the nagging, just tiring, draining, drawn-out reality of issues in life God is leaving open-ended for now.
[13:28] You don't have all of the answers that you want, that you'd like, that you've even prayed for. Uncertainty, unanswered questions, the unknown outcomes of the future are with you each and every day.

And I can say this, Peter's readers could relate to you if that's what you're experiencing. And again, I say levels. You may say, yeah, there's a certain degree of uncertainty or unansweredness in my life right now, and I would put it at a level down here.
It's not super important. It isn't life-shattering. But I'd like to know. I'd like to get that resolved. And then others of you are like, no, it's life-impacting, and I need to know.
It's tough. It's hard to be there. Or maybe you're facing the suffering of age and health as our bodies wear out and as you battle illnesses and become more prone to things that used to not bother you. You didn't even think about. I was talking to my mom yesterday. Yesterday was her birthday, 81 years old. And a lot of change in my mom's life in the last 20 months.
[14:47] My father passed away. She is in the process of selling the house they lived in and moving. She's already moved into a small apartment and just so many things going on.

She's got lots of health issues. And she had shown us some pictures of her apartment and sent them to us. And, you know, it was beautiful. She, you know, she's just that's, she's got a thing for that, an ability there.
But, you know, Jeff, I'm the oldest of the kids. And so I'm looking at those pictures and I'm looking, I'm checking it out, you know. And the first thing I notice down the hallway, which is a major thoroughfare from her little bitty living room into the bedroom and the bathroom and all that is this long throw rug.
Alonza's laughing because she's from, see? And so we're talking, hey, mom, it's so beautiful. Mom. Mom, so if you found any issues going on in the house, you know, a little, a little.
And so we talked through some, I said, yeah, but all right. So mom, I noticed that that rug in the hallway, it's pretty rug. You got to tell your mama that she's picking out pretty stuff.
[15:57] All right. It's pretty. But what do you think about that as a trip hazard? Ding. Your sister has already taken care of that. She's taped it down.

Oh, no, yes. That was not in the picture. So just to let you know, I didn't overlook that. Cecilia, my sister, took care of that. You know what? There was a time in my life with my mom, I never, ever thought about her tripping and falling.
Guess what the doctor told her two weeks ago? She has a severe case of osteoporosis. If she falls and breaks any part of her pelvis or any major area in her torso, he said, you stand an 85% chance of death.
You will not recover. Tripping is a big deal for my mom. Never used to even worry about it. We age. Illness. Things we never thought we had to worry about. Now we got to worry about them. Worry. I say, be concerned. Take measures. Be prudent. Life.

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[17:05] I imagine that when Peter wrote this, there were plenty of old people. Maybe they'd made the journey. Maybe some of them had died as refugees because they just couldn't withstand the hardship. You know, in these days, you didn't ride in heated and air-conditioned stuff.

You're out in the open. Most of them had to walk. Peter's readers could relate to this. Maybe, finally, some of us are just feeling the strain and the stretch of everyday life as we work and play and pay, as we try to persevere in an anti-God world of unbelief.
Peter's readers could relate to you, to us. Here's what he does. He offers us three trustworthy expressions of God's kindness to us in Jesus Christ.
And I think he had in mind this. This is what I came up with. He wants to rejuvenate our souls, refocus our minds, and reassure our hearts, even as we live day to day in what Solomon called in Ecclesiastes the vanity of vanities.
The vanity of vanities. When we went through that book, that was the theme, wasn't it? So the first thing that I want to point out to you as we move through this expositionally is God's kindness being brought near to him.
[18:34] This is for Christians. Christians living in the kindness and under the kindness of the Lord, being brought near to him is that first kindness, and it's in verse four.

It's in the first few words in the little phrase or the little clause, and coming to him. And coming to him. Him, of course, is the Lord Jesus as a referent from verse three.
If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord, and coming to him, the Lord.
And the theme that Peter is building on is God's kindness in Christ for those he chose, for those he forgave, and for those whom he's now sustaining by his love for them.
I've forgiven you. I've chosen you. I'm sustaining you. And so we're told, and you can come to him. So Peter, right at the outset here, doesn't want these people to neglect knowing this wonderful kindness.
[19:50] He doesn't want them to allow the issues of life to obscure or to drive away or distract from their awareness of the warm, warm love of God in Christ for them.

Whatever else is going on, whatever else is happening in their lives, he doesn't want them to go awash from this love and kindness that God continually sustains them in and pours out on them. And boy, that is exactly what life does. That is exactly what Satan does. He wants to obscure. He wants to cloud over and keep our eyes fixed on earthly things so that we take for granted and miss and move right past these beautiful kindnesses that God's doing.
And folks, listen, if you've ever gone through a trial, you know that as you come through that trial, God will often reveal things to you, especially as you come out toward the other end of that trial. You begin to look back on what was happening and you say, man, God was working in me and I can see where God's identified this and this and this. And he's brought me to terms with this and this, right?
[21:07] That's the way it works. And so Peter can say, this is a blessing. Now, how many people in the world can walk around and say, I'm in the midst of suffering in a trial and I find that there is blessing in this.

There's meaning, there's purpose, there's design, and God has me in his hands so that whatever it is I'm facing, whatever the unknown is out there, it's not unknown to the one that counts the most. He knows. So even if I don't, I attach myself to him and I'm safe. I'm good to go.
Where we struggle is this. Yeah, but I want to know. Let me go further because this is what we hear. This is what I've done. No, no, no, no, no. I must know.
I turn it into a must, a should, an ought. And then pretty soon what happens is that must, should, and ought becomes an idol in my life so that I'm wanting that more than I want the Lord.
[22:14] I want an answer more than I want faithfulness to Christ. So now I'm bowing down and worshiping what I want most, not what God wants most for me. Now I'm in trouble.

Peter recognizes this dynamic. And so what does he do to help them with it? He points them to the kindness of Christ. God has been kind to you in giving you the greatest gift he could possibly give you.
Jesus himself. God did not shortchange you. He didn't jip you. He didn't give you plan C or D or even B.
He gave you A. You get God's A game when you get Jesus. Peter wants to keep them there. Right where they are. And so he says, and coming to him.

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Now, folks, this is an expression not of their initial salvation. This is an expression of closeness. This is an expression of being known by Jesus and of knowing him because you are near and dear to Christ as his child.
[23:33] So and coming to him doesn't refer back to when you were born again to the moment of your salvation. It refers to the ongoing reality of your nearness to him. That he treasures you.

He wants you to be near him, with him, fellowshipping with him. He wants that. Christ doesn't want anything to stand between you and nearness to him.
Now, do you believe that he loves you enough to do something about anything that would serve to get in the way of him being Lord in your life? And would you consider that operation of the Lord Jesus in dealing with that as a blessing?
Because you say, you know, sometimes it don't feel like it. Well, yeah. When God reaches in and wants to rip an idol out of your heart because it's standing between you and him, that's something that you've elevated.
You think that's going to hurt a bit? Yeah. So it's one thing that we just struggle with the hardship of life. It's another thing when we struggle with the hardship of life and these idols are part of that struggle and God is having to deal with the idols that we form in our hearts.
[24:49] So Peter's pointing these people to the kindness of the Lord in all of it, in every single bit of it. Come close to Jesus. Come near to him.

It's a very interesting word if you look up on the screen here. Proserkomai. Proserkomai. It means to come to or to draw near to.
It's the same word, if you'll turn with me, that's used in Hebrews 10. So turn back before Peter. You'll see the book of James. Turn a few more pages and you'll be to Hebrews.
Hebrews, James, 1 Peter. And 1 Peter 10, verse 22. We'll start in verse 19. Now I want you to see the context here because this relates exactly to what Peter's telling us in our passage.
Hebrews 10, 19. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which Jesus, he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is his flesh.
[26:05] And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near. That's our word.

Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
Now look, folks, this is all priest language. This is all the language of the temple and the priests and the cleansing and the forgiveness of sin that goes on as the priest worked to find the people cleansed from that sin and brought into the presence of the Lord.
The priest would mediate that reality for the people of Israel. So you look at verse 22 and it says, you have your heart sprinkled clean and your bodies washed.
That was an activity of the priests in the worship of ancient Israel. Now bringing that over into the New Testament, our author in Hebrews is saying, this is what Jesus has done for each of you as your single great high priest.
[27:18] Jesus has made it now possible for you to draw near into the place where only the priest used to be allowed to go, not the people, the holy of holies, into the very presence of almighty God.

Now you are a priest and you get to go into the presence of almighty God through Christ who is the high priest. He's made all of this possible.
And so what are we encouraged to do in that reality? Draw near, come, come with a sincere heart and a full assurance of faith.
faith. Now what you see in that is no hesitation. No shrinking back. We do counseling. One of the greatest ways that we help people deal with shame and guilt, two of the most debilitating things you'll ever see attack a human being, is we help people to see that Jesus took their shame and guilt for them and paid in full all that shame and guilt would render on them, which would be the devil's hell because we are guilty and we should be ashamed for rebellion against the Lord.
Jesus took all of that on himself and paid the full price for that and now we are given the perfect righteousness, the perfection of Jesus to stand now in the holy place before almighty God, perfect in Christ.
[28:56] And so now we can draw near with full assurance. No shame, no guilt. Jesus took care of all of that. This is where we can go to counsel people like that and help them see what God has

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done for us in Jesus.

We don't have to be plagued by those things anymore. We bring them to God in our relationship with Christ. The whole point, and I'm hammering it, is this. Draw near to Jesus.
Come near fellowship with him. Know him. Know who he is for you. Boy, if you don't see that this is very, very individual and personal, you'll miss it.
And then he brings us together as that corporate body in just a moment. Together, drawing near to him. God spiritually united us to Jesus by his grace through faith.
That's how that interaction happens spiritually. God pours out on us the gift of his grace, the gift of faith. We exercise that gift of faith in Jesus Christ.
[30:06] We trust Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and to make us right with God. So the cross means everything to us because the cross is where that sin debt was paid by Jesus as my substitute.

I should have been there. That should be me. I'm the criminal. I'm the one that rebelled against the law of God, took matters into my own hands, elevated myself as my own king.
That's how I lived and every sinner lives. But God took Jesus Christ and made him our substitute, laid Jeff Jackson's sins on his own perfect son who was sinless.
So Jesus took my sins to the cross and was tortured to death on my behalf to pay the debt I owe to his father.
He went into the grave dead, having paid my penalty. And then God raised him from the dead on the third day and resurrected him to show God's power over sin and death.
[31:16] Hallelujah. And now I can come into the presence of this wonderful, this debt-paying God. I can come into his presence and kneel before him and find in him grace, forgiveness, mercy, kindness, tenderness, gentleness, patience.

That's how he lives with me. That's how he treats me. He doesn't look at me and say, well, shame on you. Slap, slap, slap. That's what I do to myself because I'm prideful.
But if I run to Jesus, I don't find that. I find more of, come to me, Jeff, I'm so glad you came to me. Welcome, son, welcome.
See? And so we come to him as we should. I may only get through this one point today, Greg. We know and we grow in closeness to Christ as we experience reassurance from the faithful outpouring of his kindness to us in so many ways.
This is what Peter knew. But you must reflect on Jesus and his kindness. You must. And there are so many things in life that want to rob you of that reflection, that knowledge, that understanding, that conscious awareness each day in your life.
[32:56] Living in the kindnesses of Jesus despite the hardships that you're enduring. Now, what brings us to this place of nearness and reassurance in our walk with the Lord?

What does? Here's the answer. He does. He does. It's not a formula. Don't look for that. It's not a secret.
It's not hidden between the white spaces of the Bible. There's no code. Forget the code. There's no code. It's Jesus and him crucified and raised again to the glory of God for the forgiveness of sins. That's it. Exclamation point. It's all of Jesus and all to him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it. White as snow. It's his work. It's his glory. It's his honor.
[34:04] It's his goodness. It's all about him. But we must reflect. As we reflect on him as we rehearse the truth of his love and kindness toward us we are drawn deeper into him and that's what you want.

Not deeper into you. Suzanne and I were studying at one time. This was a long time ago. This was this was in the late 80s.
We didn't know any better at the time. We were studying this particular psychological technique and they called it the trip in. And it was all about using a particular methodology to go inside of yourself and begin to figure out and discern these operations within yourself.
The trip in. Remember that? Ugh. Nasty. We didn't know it at the time. Well we don't need a trip into ourselves. That's exactly what Peter doesn't want these people to do.
He's pointing them to Christ and he's saying I need you I want you to reflect on meditate on realize and own the reality of God's kindness to you and the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be able to get over yourself.

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[35:23] you'll be able to put these hardships into perspective. They are not beyond a good and kind God. They are part of the operation of God's kindness in your life.

It isn't just a paradigm shift. It's a way of understanding reality. So I'm not asking you to psych yourself out.
I'm asking you to grasp the reality of what God is putting before you. This is exactly what James meant when he instructed us to draw near to God and he will draw near to you.
That's James chapter 4 verse 8. The question then, how do you draw near to God? Well, the answer comes, only God's people can do that.
What we're talking about here, remember, is these are people who've already come to salvation, to forgiveness for their sins through trusting Jesus Christ. Now they're being beckoned, draw near, come to Christ in a way of fellowship, continued renewal, deepening your understanding and your walk, your commitment, your devotion, to Jesus.
[36:42] Let him warm your heart and inform your heart and bring you with him. Folks, here it is. You draw near to God through your nearness to his word.

No surprise there. You probably saw it coming. This is what Peter's telling us. God's word brings you to God because in scripture you meet Jesus. There's the point.
We don't read the scriptures for some kind of formula to help us fix what's going on in our lives. We read the scriptures and interact with the scriptures because it's in the scriptures that we meet our God.
And our God is the one that makes the difference. So that's why we say don't seek the solution as much as you seek the Savior. In seeking the Savior you will come to the solution.
It will happen. I'm not saying it's wrong to ask God to help me understand what to do. Is this right or wrong? Should I zig or zag? Right or left? Up or down? But in doing that you don't make it your idol.
[37:46] You don't bow down to the answer and give all of your resources in life and stay awake at night flipping and flopping worrying about the answer. When's the answer? What's the answer? When's the answer? I've done that too.

You seek the Lord. You follow hard on the Lord. You press hard on walking with Jesus. God's word brings you to God because in scripture you meet the Lord and in Jesus you are given access to God by grace through faith.
So folks here's what Peter's been telling us remember longing for God's word the pure milk longing for God's word as the best way to know God will help you nurture a longing for God through experience with his kindness to you and Christ.
God's word shows you God's kindness. That's where you go to see the kindness of God as God has written it out for you to understand.
Folks so I'm saying to you you don't have to turn this into some secret kind of treasure hunt or something like that. It's very evident.
[38:58] Let me take you to a place real quickly. I can see right now. It's okay. Don't panic. We won't get through all of it today but that's fine right? That's okay. All right.

Psalm 145. Psalm 145. This is where we were in our call to worship this morning. Now we're going to return to this and here's what we can do.
as I read down through a portion of Psalm 145. Let's use this passage to prompt us into being more cognizant of more aware of God's kindnesses to us.
Now in the New Testament we realize all of this comes to us through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. So let's just look for God's kindnesses in this. Every time we read something that you could mark off oh that's kind.
That's an expression of kindness or goodness or love to us. Mark it in your mind. All right. We'll start in verse 8. The Lord is gracious and merciful. Do you have two so far?
[40:08] Okay. Slow to anger. Number three. And great in what? Mine says loving kindness. What does yours say? Steadfast love.

Chesed. I can't do it. The Hebrew. Chesed. That's what you're supposed to say. Steadfast love of the Lord. Loving kindness. The Lord is good to all.
That he is. That's right. Even to unbelievers. His mercies are over all his works. All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and your godly ones shall bless you.
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and talk of your power to make known to the sons of men your mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of your kingdom.

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Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord sustains all who fall and God raises up all who are bowed down.
[41:13] What kindness? The eyes of all look to you and what do you do, Lord? See, the eyes of all, that's an expectation. That's an expectant, needy look.

All the eyes look to you. Will you provide? Will you answer? Will you come? Will you help? Will you be there? Can I count on you?
And what does it say? The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due time. Oh, it didn't say, Jeff, when you say, okay, I'm at my limit, you need to really take care of this now, I'm done, I'm done with you in this.
In due time, because he knows. He knows. Friends, look at this verse 16, you open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.
Isn't that beautiful? You open your hand, man, what happens if he closes it? Been those times. The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his deeds.
[42:22] There isn't a single thing that God does that isn't kind to his people. The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him. Those who have a high and holy reverence for God, he will fulfill their desire. Look what he will do in verse 19. He will also hear their cry and he will save them.
The Lord keeps all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. You see any kindness there? See, we go to scripture and we're prompted by the truth of scripture to celebrate the kindness of God.
This is what Peter is telling these people to do. Come to him. Look, everything I've been saying to you right now is under just this first little and coming to him and coming to him.
All of this comes to us as we come to Christ and find in him our all in all. And that's just what Peter tells us about the Lord Lord Jesus. He is a living stone rejected by men, but chosen and precious in the sight in the sight of almighty God, the father.
[43:46] And he uses a very interesting word to tell us that and coming to him as to a living stone. Everything with Peter is living, which has been rejected by men, but is I don't know what yours says.

Mine says choice, but is choice and precious in the sight of God. Choice is eclectum. It means appointed.
God appointed, elected Jesus. Did you know that? He did. This is what it says right here.
Which has been rejected by men, but is elected, electum, and precious or invaluable in the sight of God. If you look with me at Hebrews chapter 3, you'll get a little taste for this.
Hebrews 3, and we can look at verses 1 through 4 to deal with this understanding and idea of God the Father electing, choosing, marking out the Lord Jesus for this work of being our Savior.
[44:58] Hebrews 3, 1, therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider, this is good now, consider Jesus notice what he says about Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

He was faithful to him who appointed him. That's God appointing Jesus. As Moses also was in all his house, for he has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house itself.
For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. God is the one building this spiritual house, and Jesus is the chief cornerstone in that house.
And we're going to unpack what that means back to 1 Peter. This is what Peter's dealing with as he points these people to God the Father and saying even Jesus was elected or appointed to what he experienced, right?
Before God the Father. So what you're experiencing as God appoints you to move through these trials, keep Christ in mind, and follow Christ.
[46:25] Trust the Father in all of that. The picture that Peter is giving us here, coming to him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God.

The picture he's giving us here is of stone masons, builders, who would discard, choose between and then discard stones on the work site.
They would just, they're working away, they're doing their thing, and I understand this, you're in the moment, and you don't want to be taken away from what you're doing to do something else, and so you're looking at a stone, and it's not quite the one that you need or want, or it's got some flaw in it,

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and so what you do is you just kick it out of the way, or roll it away, or roll it out of the way down the hill, or whatever, and you leave it.
You just keep working. Well, over time, that stone's still sitting there, nobody else wants to deal with it either, so you're walking all around it, and over it, and tripping, and doing this kind of thing, this is the picture that he's giving to us.
The stones they reject are useless to them. They don't even pay them any more mind. That's the view that mankind took of the Lord Jesus Christ. The religious leaders evaluated Jesus' claims.
[47:44] They did, and they rejected him and them outright. They discarded Jesus like they would a flawed stone. And just kicked it over into the dust.

That's what they did. But, Peter tells us, God chose Christ, and holds Jesus precious in his sight.
Now, folks, hear this. This is the way of the blind and sinful world, hating and dishonoring what God loves and honors. That's just the way it is, isn't it?
It's always been like that. So, he comes to this place. Look what he says next. And so, you also, you see that? And coming to him as to a living stone, which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
You also connects us to Jesus. That is both hard and beautiful to pause and to take in.
[49:07] What do I mean? You also rejected by men. rejected by men for your faith, for your diligence, for your kindness, your gentleness, your self-control, your love for Christ, your integrity in the Lord, your refusal to cheat and swindle and lie and manipulate and control.

And so, you're rejected. You're rejected. That's the hard. But you also chosen by God and precious in his sight.
So, which estimation is more important to you? The estimation of the world about you or even your own estimation of yourself or the estimation of God the Father?
I chose you, I elected you, and you're precious in my sight. precious enough for me to send my perfect son as your substitute to purchase you away from sin.
At my expense. That's the love of the Lord. Folks, suffering in this world, but safe in the arms of your Savior and Lord.
[50:29] Nothing can change God's view of you, beloved. Nothing can change God's view of you. Not even you. And this is where Peter stresses his second kindness from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think I have time to move through some of this. Is that alright? Do you want more or do you want me to? What am I asking you for? Can you take a little more?
Okay. Let's move to this, to what he says next, and then I'll wrap it up. God's kindness being brought up in him. Being brought up in him.
You also, as living stones, are being built up, is how the New American Standard says it. You are being built up, brought up, as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood.
What is he talking about here? Well, I think part of the emphasis here has to be on that last part of the verse where he tells us that our spiritual sacrifices are made acceptable to God.
[51:42] Boy, there was a time in your life and in my life where there was nothing about who we were or are doing was acceptable to God. It would have got us a devil's hell for sure. But now, for us to be able to live a life that is acceptable to God?

I mean, let's think about that for just a second. What are his standards? Nothing short or less than perfection. So, how many people would raise their hand now and say, everything I say and do is perfect?
Right. Me neither. So, how is it that with the standard of perfection being the standard that God requires for us so that what we would offer him would be acceptable to him, how is it then that anything that we say or do makes it to to heaven?
Is accomplished in that standard? Well, let's just keep going a little bit. The next thing I would say to you is this. Jesus is our life. Jesus is our life.
Peter encourages us with the life-giving goodness of God to us in Christ. Christ. He tells us of God's gift of a living hope, a living word, and now he comes to this point and he says, you are living stones.
[53:08] See, he loves that life thing. Jesus is our life. You're a living stone by God's standards, not a dead one, not a brick. You say, boy, he's dumb as a brick. Well, that's not what he's talking about here.

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You're way beyond that. You're a living stone and you're integral. You're integral to God. You're precious. You are a precious stone to God.
Now, look, I'm not trying to elevate you or us to all that and certainly not above the Lord Jesus. What I'm saying is what Peter's pointing out. You're precious to God in Christ.
Jesus is your life. He is the precious. He is the precious. It makes you precious in the sight of God. He takes what was unworthy and dirty and rotten and deserving of hell and turns it into a choir member of heaven.
leaves me just about speechless.
[54:22] It leaves me just about speechless. We are living stones in the likeness of Jesus himself as a living stone.

What does he mean? As God's living stones, God lovingly places us in his construction or his creation of a living spiritual house as a holy priesthood.
Plural. That's us. By God's grace, we are then both temple and priest.
Each of us are the temple of the Holy Spirit, the temple where God dwells. God dwells in each of us. He doesn't dwell in this building. We brought Jesus into this building with us.
Jesus wasn't here waiting on us. We don't need to pray Jesus down from heaven. We don't need to pray the Holy Spirit and ask the Holy Spirit to come and be in this place.
[55:31] The Holy Spirit came in the door with you, beloved. That's why you're born again. A new creature in Christ. God living in you.

You're the temple. We become bricks. Each of us precious, chosen of God, precious in His sight. And now God using each one of us as living stones, placing us carefully into this spiritual house called the church that He Himself is building with His hands and the devil cannot destroy it.
And in all of that, He's making us a holy priesthood so that we are both temple and we are priests because we are then beckoned and welcomed.
Come into my presence, church. I see you in the perfect righteousness of my Son. Welcome. God is telling us, God is telling us, you are supposed to be here before me.
[56:41] It's where you belong. I've purchased that for you with the blood of my Son. This is your home. This is where you should feel perfectly at home.

Wow. Now, you say that to each other and that's true and maybe my circumstances don't change one single bit.
The person who hates me that I love and I don't want them to hate me, they keep hating me. Maybe that's the case. The person I'm at odds with and I don't want to be at odds with, I'm still at odds with. The situation I'm facing where I don't have the answers that I'd like to have, that's all still there. Whatever it is, the health issues I'm facing as I watch my body literally fall apart before my eyes, it's still there.
My sickness, my disease, my whatever. Maybe the circumstances don't change, but do you see where Peter's directing their heart and their focus and how that will make all the difference in that reality?
[57:55] He's calling them to see a higher reality about themselves, to get them out of themselves, off the earthly mindedness and couch all of that in the reality of God's design and purpose.

It may not change the circumstances, but it can sure work in the heart. That's where he wants them to be. See the kindness of the Lord in all of this.
God has made acceptable our offerings to him because they come through Christ. They're offered in Christ. So we are God's priests offering worship acceptable to him.
He dwells in us in Christ. We live as priests to offer up to him spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through the Lord. Folks, look, you can see throughout this passage, Peter is drawing, he's drawing heavily on Old Testament allusions.
Priests were given the unique privilege and responsibility of mediating between God and his people, as I mentioned earlier. Now look, believers, believers have been chosen by the master builder as living stones that God is using in constructing this spiritual house called the church, his church.
[59:27] church. So together, together, we form God's new covenant priesthood, offering God's spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him through our spiritual union with Jesus.

Now I want to show you just a few references before we close out. I want to take you to these places because I want to answer something for you. What are these spiritual sacrifices that we are

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able to make to God on behalf of Jesus that God finds acceptable and receives from us?
Boy, that is just awesome that we can live a life like that. And you say, Jeff, is that something that God really calls us and expects us to do every single day no matter what we're doing?
Our jobs, our marriages, our parenting, our relationships, the way we treat the cashier at the store, the way that we culture and cultivate an attitude toward life, a particular attitude, all of that, God expects and desires and wants and has framed all of that to be worship?
Yes. Yes. Yes. And more. Everything comes under that category. Every single day, all day long, it's all worship, worship, worship, worship.
[60:57] So let's go to Romans 12, 1 and 2. If you're already there, I'll get there with you. Romans 12, 1 and 2. What are these sacrifices we can offer the Lord? And then I'll wrap it up.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.
He uses a lot of plurals in here to show that he's speaking in a plurality about the church. So this is not an emphasis of each one of us individually presenting ourselves.
This is the body of Christ presenting itself as a living and holy sacrifice. So this is a corporate, a corporate encouragement or admonition that he's entreating us for.
And then he goes on in verse 2, do not be conformed to this world. Why? Well, because you are offering yourselves to God in spiritual worship. So don't be conformed to the world's idea of what worship is, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
[62:18] Let God renew the way you think about this. Why? So that you can prove what the will of God is, that which is good, acceptable, and perfect. That's the kind of worship that God wants.

Look with me at Romans chapter 15, verses 16 and 17. We'll start in verse 15.
But I have written very boldly to you on some point so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, Paul says, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable to God, sanctified, that is made holy.
That offering of the Gentiles coming to Christ in salvation would be made holy by the Holy Spirit.
Verse 17, therefore, God doing that work through the Apostle Paul in Christ Jesus, I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.
Boy, isn't that good? I can't take any credit for all of this. the Holy Spirit, my relationship with Jesus is making this possible. It's through Jesus that these offerings are being made acceptable to almighty God.
[63:49] Oh, I'll boast about that all day, he says. And then finally, in Hebrews, chapter 13, Hebrews 13, verse 15, through him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.

That is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
Now, we would read that and say, oh, yes. Oh, I bear the burden of sacrificing for Jesus every day. It's a heavy one. Somebody's got to do it.
I'm so glad God has me. He can count on. That's not the sacrifice we're talking about, you. We're talking about the sacrifices that you offer to God in spiritual worship because you're enamored with Jesus.
And you want to offer him everything because he deserves everything from you. So you can't wait to get up in the morning and make more offerings, more sacrifices before him.
[65:07] God, it's going to be exciting. How will I worship you today? Now, this isn't Pollyanna. You know, you've got people on different ends of the spectrum.

You've got the Eeyores. They get up every day, every day, every day. I've got to do this for Jesus. Right? That's Eeyore. And then you've got over here, you've got the sprites.
The sprites. Oh, they see good in everything. Everything's fine. Oh, boy. Oh, really? Did that happen to you? That's just another opportunity for you to praise Jesus and you just want to go. So, where's the in-between?
What's it look like? It looks like people making much of Jesus. That's what it looks like. It looks like people, real people, suffering real issues, dealing with real matters in their home and in their jobs and in their life, making much of Jesus Christ.
I can't tell you every little way to do that, but when you're making much of Jesus, you're in that zone and that's what Peter, that's what our authors here are telling us.

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[66:21] make much of the Lord. Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of our lips, thanks, don't neglect doing good, don't neglect sharing.

These are the kind of sacrifices that God himself is pleased with. Now, I want you to take careful note, friends. Take careful note of what these passages teach us about our roles as priests before the Lord and before each other.
All right, here's what they teach us. They teach us that our worship, our worship gives birth to our works. What we worship defines how we live.
So our worship defines our service to God and others. It's just, Greg, isn't it neat that we're in chapter 6 about worship and our grace gatherings and this is where Peter has us.
We offer our entire lives as sacrifices of worship to God because God has given us the gift of life in his son.
[67:31] So we live back to God as a sacrificial offering what God has given to us in his son. What is that? Life. Life. So all of my life becomes a sacrifice of worship to God because God showered me with the gift of life in Christ.

Now to put a little bit of a finer point on it, Dr. MacArthur pointed out seven spiritual sacrifices Christians make to God. He kind of took the passages I shared with you, I think.
He didn't reference all of those and summed them up. We offer to God our bodies, our praises, our good works, our possessions, our converts, our love, and our prayers.
That's what we offer to the Lord. Our sacrifices of worship are acceptable to God through our union with Jesus as our forever high priest.
And this is why we say all of life is worship. All of life is worship. If you struggle with understanding that, hopefully this is clarifying you. Jesus makes your entire life matter to God and eternity.
[68:45] Wow! You say, what counts in my life? Everything counts. Who you are in Jesus and what you do for Jesus counts so that your offerings to God made in love to Christ are received by God forever.

And this forever reality between us and God is what Peter tells us is the next kindness that we all enjoy in Christ. I'll save that for later.
Hopefully this is enough to keep us full through the week, give us things to meditate on. My challenge, admonition, encouragement to us all is that we would take careful measure of God's kindnesses to us in Christ throughout this week and that we would offer a joyful, smile-filled prayer of thanks to God for the outpouring of His kindness to us in Jesus.
And if we're not in the habit of doing that, we'll ask God to help us develop it. How can I reflect on your kindness to me today, Lord? Put kindness in my heart and kindness on my lips and then let me turn and offer kindness to others.
Well, let's pray together. Father, as always, dear God in heaven, we are deeply convicted by the truth of the word as we are confronted with Your kindness to us.
[70:19] And God, I think all of us are sobered by just how much we take for granted Your kindness. You have given us everything in Jesus.

He is our life and our hope. Jesus is the love that You have for us shown in Him. And so we ask You, Father, to be merciful toward us in the struggles that we have with ourself.
And we pray, Father, that You will help lift our hearts to this beautiful plane of knowing and rehearsing and just really reciting Your kindnesses to us.
Let us do this, Lord, when we're in the shower or when we're driving or in sitting at our desk or going about our business. let us go down the aisles of the grocery store and be prompted to rehearse the kindnesses of Your heart that You flood us with such an abundance of goods and commodities that make our lives comfortable.
And there's so many ways we can thank You and see kindness from Your hand. You have opened Your hand and flooded us with goodness. And so it is, Lord God, help us to offer You praise and worship and not be robbed.
[71:57] You would not be robbed in those moments of what we can make of You as we celebrate Jesus and His goodness to us. And for those of us in the hearing of this message that are suffering in some way and it's very real to us, God, it has a sharp point on it, will You please help my brothers and sisters look to You and rest in You, give them practical ways of coming to You, Lord, and trusting You and knowing, knowing that everything that You designed for their lives is purposed to draw them nearer to Jesus and make them more like Him and help them to give themselves to that

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and to You.

Thank You for inviting us to come near and to know in You the wonderful love and mercy and grace that we need to be sustained in this life and to thrive for Your glory.
It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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