You are God’s Chosen!

1 Peter 1:1-9 (Key Verse 1:2)

*“who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”*

Happy new year, it is so wonderful to see you all here. This passage was our 2025 UBF key verse passage. Now that the year 2025 has ended, do you feel you lived through the power of living hope in the year 2025? Or did you start last year with much hope but towards the end you were hopeless? In today’s passage I want to focus on our identity in this world. That we are God’s chosen people. It is from this clear identity that we can truly have living hope. We will be reminded of our identity, what it means to be God’s chosen people, and that it is a lifestyle that we daily chose to obey Jesus Christ. It is my hope and prayer that through this passage we can be encouraged to live a life of purpose and meaning as God’s chosen people. Amen!

Apostle Peter wrote this letter around A.D. 63 during the reign of the evil Roman Emperor Nero. Scattered Christians, in the region we now know as Turkey, were going through adverse persecution. Peter encourages them to overcome their trials, to influence their societies, and advance the reign of Christ. In these opening verses, he reminded them that they were God’s chosen people, and that they have a living hope. Then he taught them how they should live.

Apostle Peter begins this passage with a clear identity as a servant of Christ Jesus. This means that his message is not of human origin but inspired by the one he serves. His message was addressed to God’s chosen people, who were exiles, verse 1b says, “…To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,” This however sounds contradictory, they are God’s elect same time they are exiles scattered around. This is because to be God’s chosen people, you then cannot be friends with this world. The values of this world are not in agreement with God. The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not welcome in this world. And so they were forced to leave their homes, move to foreign lands, loose their job positions and start from ground zero in those foreign countries. We probably cannot imagine how difficult their lives were: missing their family members, working menial jobs to survive, confronting language and cultural barriers. Life was not happening the way they wanted. Moreover, they were discriminated against and alienated.

How did Peter respond to this situation? Did Peter wallow in despair and loose heart? Peter instead reminded the believers that though they were exiles and scattered throughout, they were chosen. Look at verse 2a, “2awho have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” True believers did not choose themselves, but are people who are chosen by God. It is not out of merit or dependant on human strength or ability. However, out of the grace of God, we are chosen. The night before Jesus crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you…” (Jn 15:16). The disciples could overcome fiery trials by holding onto Jesus’ calling, they became new history makers. This grace of choosing is given to all who trust in Jesus. Knowing that God chose us gives us confidence in God and his grace rather than ourselves and our merit. How is God’s choosing expressed? Verse 2 says, “through the sanctifying work of the Spirit….” God sends the Holy Spirit to his chosen people. The Holy Spirit sets us apart from the corruption of the world, the Holy Spirit draws us to Christ, the Holy Spirit equips us to carry out his holy mission. As the Holy Spirit works in us, we are sure of God’s choosing.

Now the natural question that arise is, why does God choose, why is you and I chosen? Look at verse 2 again, “….to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:” Being chosen is not a title or the end in itself. It is calling, we are chosen to be obedient to Jesus Christ. Obedience means to listen and follow Jesus. As we listen to Jesus’ words and follow him, our lives change. Our sinful desires subside, and holy desires grow in us. Selfish people become sacrificial. Sorrowful people become joyful. Fearful people become courageous. Angry people become peaceful. We grow in love, joy and peace. In a word, we become more like Jesus. This is God’s desire for us. This does not happen by our own effort. We are sinful. But as we repent and confess our sins each day, the Holy Spirit applies Jesus’ blood to us. He forgives our sins and cleanses us. Our changed lives reveal God’s goodness, power and love and bring glory to him.

After identifying himself and God’s chosen people, Peter begins his message to them, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance.” Even though they faced many hardships and difficulties, they could experience abundant grace and peace in their daily lives, overflowing, abundant grace and peace. It comes from God and is given freely by his love.

However, in this world we are not honoured as God’s chosen children. Rather in many instances we are viewed as the wired ones, our message of the gospel seem to upset many people. Within our families our opinions may be disregarded because we are chosen of God. Because we refuse to practice certain things especially family traditional rituals that do not align with the gospel, we are seen as disrespectful by our elders and parents.

Moreover, we can be overwhelmed by our own sins, faults and weaknesses. Then we can doubt that we are really God’s children. We develop a kind of spiritual amnesia and forget all of God’s grace and work in our lives. We become victims of spiritual identity theft. At such times we must listen to God’s words, **“You are a chosen people” (1Pe 2:9)** The living God has chosen us to be his children. The living God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is our Father. His love for us never fails; he hears our prayers; he protects and provides for us; he guides us in the best way. He gave us a great mission to share the gospel with those who are lost. We can offer hope to the nations. We are very precious in the sight of God. Let’s deeply accept that we are God’s chosen people.

Let us all read verse 3, “3Praise 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,” because we are God’s chosen people, God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And again this is all because of the mercy of God. For this reason we can be filled with joy and praise God. This joy is because of the living hope the lord has given us. God is so merciful to us. He has given us a living hope. We were helpless under the power of sin and death. We could do nothing to save ourselves. Money, education, science, technology, good deeds–none of these could save us. But in his great mercy, God sent Jesus into the world to die for our sins. Then God raised him from the dead. The Risen Christ ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He gives eternal life to anyone who believes in him.

Hope is vital for daily living, as we learned initially the believers were exiles and facing all kinds of difficulties in life. Instead of falling into despair, Peter reminds them that they are chose by God. They may be treated like no bodies or strangers in this world. And because they are chosen of God, they have living hope for without hope, we despair. Despair poisons our minds and hearts, just as surely as a snake’s venom poisons our blood. It is the disease that leads to death. What is worse, the devil torments despairing people, accusing and condemning them. This is what drives so many people to feelings of worthlessness. This is why we can waste our time on trivial pursuits, and don’t value our own lives. We desperately need some kind of hope. Hope makes us feel alive and empowers us to do great things.

Somehow lately I have been thinking of death, I think it began with the passing of my neighbour in Kuruman, who was like a second father to me. Then later the passing of Khomo’s brother. I was even watching a superman serries which at the end, superman dies. And I felt deeply touched when the serries went through the end of his life on earth. He died nicely on his dearth bed with family. This then sent me back to memories of how my father died, he was rushed to hospital, it was early morning and so I heard that nurses were busy drinking their tea and having their morning chats, while he was on the wheel chair with no one to attend to him. It was juts some in some few minutes that he passed on. That must have been a lonely way to pass on. And this filled me with despair, If there is anything I hate with disgust in this world, it is dearth. It just feels like it is robbing us of something precious, life. And so I was again left with feelings of despair, wondering again, what is meaning and purpose of life. Since I started work, I do not even seem to having motivation to do meaningful things. I am ok to do what am asked to do, however i seem to be hopeless in doing what am called to be. And so this passage is truly a reminder of who I am in this world. I am chosen by God, which means my life is calling to something greater than my own life. I repent of placing too much hope in this life and this world. I am chosen by God, God’s choice, to live a life of repentance and follow Jesus. Jesus alone is my meaning and purpose in this life. My daily meaning and purpose is to follow Jesus. And I believe as I follow Jesus, God will plant living hope and to look forward to the kingdom of God, so that my hope is not in this life and world. It is my prayer that I may obey Jesus, repent and follow Jesus so I may live as God’s chosen person. In the words 1 Cor 15:55-57, “55“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I praise and thank God for Jesus Christ. Indeed Jesus my saviour and victory in this life and the next. Amen!

In conclusion, as we begin this year, may we remember who we are, you and me are God’s chosen people. We are not just a product of our parents to follow the way the world does things. Rather, we are God’s chosen people. This is a call to live a particular lifestyle that says Jesus is alive and I will follow him. It is a call to live a of purpose and meaning. Let us read verse 2 again, “who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.” It is all but the work of the God, God sanctified us through the work of the spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ. Our first basic command from Jesus is to repent from a life of sin and come follow him. We can repent because Jesus died for our sin on the cross, we are sprinkled by his blood because sin no longer has power to claim our lives. While people are busy with new year resolutions, It is my prayer that we may assess our lives and repent so that we may obey Jesus and follow him. May we accept God’s forgiveness of our sin and live as those who are chosen by God. Amen!