

A Counter-Cultural Life

Built Different #4 - Pastor Jonathan Combs - June 21, 2026 - 1 Peter 1:13-19

INTRO: Good morning church! Today we are continuing our sermon series entitled “Built Different.” This fairly recent phrase is used to describe a person who stands above the rest, whose physical or mental prowess is uncommon. Indeed then, Christians should be “Built Different.”

Those in Christ are “Built Different” because their lives are built on Christ alone and not this world. Our series is based around six (6) concepts of a life built different in Jesus from Romans 12:

Series Theme: Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² **Do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

NEED: Have you ever noticed how easy it is to drift? No one accidentally becomes more like Jesus. We don't wake up one day more holy, more prayerful, more loving, or more obedient without intentional pursuit. Left to ourselves, we drift. We conform. That word pictures a mold or pattern that quietly shapes whatever is pressed into it. The world has a pattern, and if we're not careful, we'll naturally fit right into it.

We don't need anyone to teach us to be selfish, to crave comfort, to seek approval, to chase success, to live for ourselves, or to make life all about us. Those things come naturally. The culture doesn't have to force us into its mold because our sinful flesh is already attracted to it.

But here's the problem: that mold always overpromises and underdelivers. It promises satisfaction but leaves us empty. It promises freedom but leaves us enslaved. It promises significance but keeps us chasing something that never satisfies.

Yet God has something infinitely better. He created you for Himself, and through Christ He redeemed you for Himself. He has not called His people to blend into the culture but to be transformed by His grace. Christians are to be built differently because they belong to a different King.

Trans: As we turn to our text this morning, we will see just that. As Christians, we don't live differently to become God's people. We live differently because we already are God's people.

BODY: In 1 Peter chapter 1, the apostle Peter wrote to Christians living as exiles throughout Asia Minor, exhorting them to live differently in this world because they belonged to God through Jesus Christ. We can live differently in the world because we belong to God through salvation in Jesus Christ. What does a counter-cultural life look like for those who belong to Christ? The text gives us **three marks** of a counter-cultural life for those who belong to Christ.

Read text: 1 Peter 1:13-19 (ESV) ¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

THREE MARKS OF A COUNTER-CULTURAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS:

1. A life that Sets Its Hope on Christ.

EXP: (13) Peter concludes his introduction to the Christians of Asia Minor with instructions to live for Christ and not this world. He begins these instructions with a mindset shift ... **Not "Do better," but "Hope better."**

“**Therefore**” (13) - it is always good to ask what came before a therefore. The apostle Peter has been encouraging these Christians dispersed throughout Asia Minor (Modern day Turkey) that they have a living

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hope in the resurrection of Jesus and an eternal inheritance that can't be touched. Because of this, he will now call them to action ...

"Preparing" (13) (ἀναζώννυμι, *anazōnnumi*) - to gird up, to be prepared: a metaphor from the act of binding a long flowing garments closely around the body and fastened it with a leather belt when starting a journey or engaging in any work.

"Minds for action" (13) (διάνοια, *dianoia*) - the mind as a faculty of understanding, feeling, desiring.

"Sober-minded" (13) (νήφω, *nēphō*) - to be sober, to be calm and collected in spirit; to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect.

"Set your hope" (13) (ἐλπίζω, *elpizō*) - to wait for salvation with joy and full confidence. *Context:* to hope to receive something.

"Fully" (13) (τελείως, *teleiōs*) - completely, perfectly, without reservation. Peter isn't saying, "Hope mostly in Jesus." How often do Christians do this, "Jesus is my hope, but I also hope retirement satisfies me ... I also hope my kids become successful ... I also hope politics fixes everything ... I also hope my career finally fulfills me." But God's Word says, "Put all your hope in Christ and His return."

"Grace" (13) (χάρις, *charis*) - unmerited favor, salvation. **"Will be brought"** (13) (φέρω, *pherō*) - to move to, to apply (literally, 'is being brought') to you. Normally we think grace is past tense like I was saved by grace. But here grace is future as it will be brought to you. In Christ, we've experienced grace, but the greatest experience of grace is still coming.

"Revelation of Jesus Christ" (13) (ἀποκάλυψις, *apokalupsis*) - by which things or states or persons hitherto withdrawn from view are made visible to all, manifestation, appearance. Peter isn't simply commanding positive thinking. He is commanding future-oriented faith.

ARG: **The more we set our hope on the reward in Christ's return, the more ready we will be for it:**

Hebrews 9:28 (ESV) So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

So are you eagerly waiting for him? Does this eager expectation give you great hope?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (ESV) ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

"Encourage one another with these words"! Remember this, Jesus is coming back, he is our only hope. In fact, the final words Jesus chose to close the canon of scripture with was a promise!

Revelation 22:20-21 (ESV) He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

ILL: **Imagine two college students:** Both have the same difficult classes, both have exams, both have long nights of study. One believes, "None of this matters." The other has already accepted his dream job after graduation. It's the same workload, but a different hope. The second student studies differently because he knows what's waiting. Likewise, Christians endure suffering differently because they know what's waiting.

APP: What future do you think will finally make you happy? What are you waiting on before you can finally say, "Then I'll have joy"? Maybe it's a promotion, marriage, retirement, children, better health, financial freedom, a vacation, buying a home. None of those are sinful, but they make terrible saviors. Set your hope fully on Christ. **Your hope determines your habits.**

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2. A life that Reflects the Holiness of God.

EXP: (14-16) Peter exhorted these early Christians to live holy lives not by self-driven moral effort, but by reflecting the character of their Father as His obedient children.

“Obedient children” (14) (ώ�πακοή, *hypakoē*) - literally to come under the hearing; obedience, compliance, submission. This is a life characterized by submission and attentive response to God’s voice.

“Do not be conformed” (14) (συσχηματίζω, *suschēmatizō*) - to conform one's self (i.e. one's mind and character) to another's pattern, (fashion one's self according to). You likely hear the word scheme in the Greek word. This has to do with a mold or blueprint. We have a new life blueprint, so throw out the old.

“Passions” (14) (ἐπιθυμία, *epithumia*) - desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust. Often disordered cravings that pull the heart away from God.

“Former ignorance” (14) (ἄγνοια, *agnoia*) - lack of knowledge, ignorance. esp. of divine things. of moral blindness. Peter is clear that the Christian life is not mere intellectual agreement with doctrine, but a transformed way of life flowing from new birth and new identity.

“He who called you” (15) (καλέω, *kaleō*) - to call aloud, utter in a loud voice. to invite.

1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of **him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

“Be holy” (15) (ἅγιος, *hagios*) - in a moral sense, pure, sinless, upright, holy. A saint, sacred.

“In conduct” (15) (ἀναστροφή, *anastrophē*) - manner of life, conduct, behavior. KJV translates this word as manner of conversation, making the interesting point that our actions do tell a story.

“You shall be holy, for I am holy” (16) - Peter quotes Leviticus 19:2, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” Four times these words appear in Leviticus. This call is to be holy in response to God being holy Himself.

Holiness then is not random moral effort, it is covenant reflection. God’s people are to mirror His character in the world. This holiness is not self-produced imitation, but Spirit-empowered reflection. The more we know God, the more we begin to reflect God.

ARG: **The more time we spend with God, the more we reflect His holiness:**

Acts 4:13 (ESV) Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

ILL: We are called to be little mirrors of God’s holiness in the same way our children are our little mirrors. Have you noticed how your kids pick up your phrases and body language the more time you spend with them. Have you yet noticed that the more time you spend with the Father, the more you sound like Him.

APP: Before Peter tells us to be holy, he reminds us that we have already been called by a holy God. Holiness isn't our attempt to become God's children. Holiness is the family resemblance of those who already are. Have you heard His call and received salvation. **The Gospel.**

For if you belong to God, holiness is not optional, but inevitable over time. So the real question is not “Am I trying hard enough to be holy,” but “What am I consistently exposing myself to?” If you are shaped by the world, you will reflect the world. If you are walking with the Father, you will reflect the Father. So what do you regularly watch/hear? What do you constantly think about? What voices are forming your desires?

The truth is you will become most like what you are most exposed to. We do not become holy by trying harder; we become holy by drawing nearer to the Holy One and then our lives begin to reflect Him.

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3. A life that Conducts Itself in Reverence to God.

EXP: (17-19) Peter concludes this section by showing that a counter-cultural life is shaped by four gospel realities: our relationship with God, God's impartial judgment, the brevity of our earthly life, and the immeasurable cost of our redemption.

"If you call on him as Father" (17) (ἐπικαλέω, *epikaleō*) - conditional phrase ... you have been given the opportunity to call Him Father. This word could be translated if or since. Peter is not introducing uncertainty, but assuming Christian identity. True believers now relate to God as Father (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3). This is covenant language: God is not only Judge; He is Father. Reverence in the Christian life is never detached fear, but reverent awe. NLT clarifies this well:

1 Peter 1:17 (NLT) And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here as "temporary residents."

"Who judges impartially" (17) (ἀπροσωπολήμπτως, *aprosōpolēptōs*) - without respect of persons, impartial. "... it is understood that the heavenly Father does not accept a shallow facial judgment, looking only at the way things outwardly appear." - Paige Patterson

"Conduct yourselves with fear" (17) (φόβος, *phobos*) - same word as from verse 15, but with the addition of fear (*phobos*). This word could mean fear or dread of the One who judges our deeds, but not a terror that drives us away from God, but rather a reverent awe that draws us toward obedience. It is the settled awareness that we live before a holy Father whose evaluation is true and final.

"Time of your exile" (17) (παροικία, *paroikia*) - dwell as strangers; a sojourning, dwelling in a strange land, a foreign residence. Peter is making a deeper spiritual point in his letter that the people of God are exiles on earth. This is not our home, we are Kingdom citizens so we don't live this place.

"You were ransomed" (18) (λυτρόω, *lutroō*) - to release on receipt of ransom; to redeem, to liberate by payment of ransom. You are so valuable to God that He purchased you out of darkness. We were not merely corrected by God, we were purchased by Him.

1 Corinthians 6:20 (ESV) For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

"From the futile ways" (18) (μάταιος, *mataios*) - devoid of force, truth, success, result; useless, of no purpose ... manner of life, conduct, behavior. You have been bought out of this useless living.

"Inherited from your forefathers" (18) (πατροπαράδοτος, *patroparadotos*) - received by tradition; handed down from one's father's or ancestors.

There is such beauty in this statement. I don't think it is accidental that Peter says we can now call God Father while also saying that we have been ransomed from the brokenness of our forefathers. There is a real temptation, even among Christians, to think that certain familial sins are impossible to overcome. The bad language, the anger, the addictions ... it is common for us to make excuses for them. Peter says that Christ bought us out of this.

"Not with perishable things ... silver or gold" (18) (φθαρτός, *phthartos*) - corruptible, perishing; decayed

"Precious blood of Christ" (19) (τίμιος, *timios*) - as of great price, precious; held in honour, esteemed, especially dear. Friends, we were not bought out of our futility by worldly things that one day become dust, but by the blood of the Son of God. You could not put a price on such a sacrifice. Peter's argument climaxes here: if God paid this price, then our lives cannot be lived casually.

ARG: Live a life of reverence because what you do matters to God:

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2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

ILL: If you've ever had only a short amount of time in a city or at an event you really wanted to experience, you don't drift, you prioritize. You become intentional with every moment because time feels valuable.

Peter says that is exactly what the Christian life is like: a limited time in exile, purchased at infinite cost, lived before a holy Father.

APP: What do I treat casually that God treats as costly? Where have I begun to live as if this world is my home? Where have I lost the weight of eternity in my decisions? Where am I forgetting the price of my redemption? A counter-cultural life is not a careless life, it is a life lived in reverent awe because we know who our Father is, where we are living, and what it cost to bring us home.

CONCLUSION: Today, God's Word has reminded us what life looks like for those who belong to Jesus Christ. A counter-cultural life is marked by three realities: we set our hope fully on Christ, we reflect the holiness of our heavenly Father, and we conduct ourselves with reverent awe because we have been redeemed at an infinite cost.

This calling becomes even sweeter when we realize that Jesus never asks us to walk a path that He Himself didn't first walk. His hope was fixed on the joy set before Him, so He endured the cross. He was perfectly holy in all His conduct. He lived in perfect reverence and obedience to His Father. Where we have failed, Christ succeeded. Where we have fallen, Christ stood faithful.

And now, by His precious blood, He has redeemed us from our futile way of life. Church, you were made for more than this world has to offer, and you have been purchased for a destiny beyond compare. So don't spend your life trying to fit into a world that is passing away. You belong to another kingdom. You belong to another King.

Let's Pray!