

EXILES

LIVING IN HOPE
1 & 2 PETER

SERMON TITLE: Living and Leading in Tough Times
SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 5:1-7

DATE: March 31, 2019
PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

Identity is an ever-present buzzword. This should especially be true for Christians. We are chosen, loved, forgiven, and secure in Jesus. But Peter reminds us of another part of our Christian identity—we are exiles. The "world as it is" isn't our home. We are pilgrims on a journey, telling others along the way about the wonderful things God has done in calling us out of darkness and into his light. And just like Peter's personality, these two letters that share his name are bold invitations to cling to a living hope in the face of any suffering that may come our way.

Over the course of our study in 1st Peter, we've been coming to grips with the fact that Christianity is slowly being pushed from the center of our society to the margins in many parts of our national life. In the last 20 years, a seismic shift has occurred. Our culture has and is becoming more and more hostile to our beliefs and values. Long established ways of life, ideals, and cultural influence no longer exist the way they once did. The new reality for the church in this country is that it is no longer fully integrated into the culture, and this reality will only grow more serious in the coming decades.

Just like the exiled church in the days of the apostle Peter, the church in exile today faces ever increasing insults, ridicule, and opposition. Christianity is not just viewed as wrong, but as dangerous. True, the "fiery trial" we are experiencing in this country pales in comparison to what Christians face in other parts of the world. But still, this is new territory for us and that makes it especially hard to accept. What we need most of all is to view the new set of trials and troubles from God's perspective.

The apostle Peter writes to his hurting friends, "Let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust themselves to a faithful Creator in doing what is right/good" (1Pet 4:19). He has told us what "right/good" looks like throughout the letter (1:13; 1:14-17; 4:18; 2:13-20; 3:1-7; 3:8; 4:7-11). But now he gets even more specific by addressing the leaders of the house churches to which he is writing. The question is: *What does it look like for leaders and followers to entrust themselves to God and continue to do what is right?* Basically, there are three imperatives (commands) in vv.1-7.

Elders, shepherd God's flock (1-4)...

Church, follow your leaders (5a)...

Everyone, clothe yourselves with humility (5b-7)...

In his classic book, *Humility*, Andrew Murray writes (my paraphrase): "Our one need is to study and know and trust the life that has been revealed in Christ as the life that is now ours. It is of inconceivable importance that we have a correct understanding of who Christ is...especially what may be counted as His chief characteristic—the root and essence of all His character as our Redeemer. There can only be one answer: it is His humility. What is the incarnation but His heavenly humility, His emptying Himself and becoming a man? What is His life on earth but humility, His taking the form of a servant? And what is His atonement but humility? *"He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death."* And what is His ascension and His glory, but humility exalted to the throne and crowned with glory? *"He humbled Himself...wherefore God also highly exalted Him."* In heaven where He was with the Father, in His birth, in His life, in His death, and in His sitting on the throne, it is all humility; it is nothing but humility. Christ is the humility of God embodied in human nature." Then he asks, "What would happen if believers were to become permanently guided by the humility of Jesus?"

Discussion Starters

Have someone read 1 Peter 5:1-7...

As we've been saying, we are living in a society that's becoming more and more hostile to our faith. The same was true when Peter wrote his two letters to his hurting friends in Turkey. Peter writes: "Let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust themselves to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (4:19).

1. Why is it so hard to accept that what is going on around us today is "the will of God?"
2. How are you doing with entrusting yourself (and our country) to God right now? What exactly does "entrusting" look like?
3. What does it look like for leaders and followers in the church today to entrust themselves to God and to continue to do what is right when it feels like things are slipping away?
4. What was one "take-away" from the part of the message this morning that dealt with how church leaders are to lead? Who is leading/shepherding in your group? Ask them to talk about their leadership role?
5. How does the shepherd model of leadership apply to leadership in the home or in the business world? Who is watching your "tail lights?"
6. Why does Peter emphasize humility above everything else as hostility against the church increases?
7. What does it mean to "clothe yourself with humility?" Is it possible to cultivate humility? If so, how?
8. How does "casting all your cares on God who cares for you" fit with the idea of humility?
9. Peter, quoting Proverbs 3, writes, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." How does clothing yourself with humility fit with what you feel toward those you feel is making life harder and harder for you today?
10. Read the Andrew Murray quote above--How does reflecting on the humility of Jesus help you "clothe" yourself with humility?