

# EXILES

LIVING IN HOPE  
1 & 2 PETER

SERMON TITLE: Pay Attention  
SCRIPTURE: 2 Peter 1:16-21

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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.

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*In our study through 1 Peter, we talked about how a seismic shift has occurred in our society here in the United States—how over the last several decades the church has become more and more culturally irrelevant. The fact is—we are now living in a post-Christian culture. Christianity has been pushed to the margins and our beliefs and values are under attack by the cultural elite—mainstream media, higher education, and Hollywood. ...And one of the ways that the church has responded to all this is to try and make church more relevant. We've tried to speak in a language that people outside the church can understand—not a bad thing—we've changed our music style in order to intersect with popular music—not necessarily a bad thing—but some churches have gone beyond these things and changed the content of what is preached to a kind of Christianity that's mixed with pop psychology—and—because the church in this country has existed in a fairly affluent culture—where the emphasis is on achieving "the good life"—many churches have adopted a Christianized version of the good life. This is the message that lots of Christians—especially if you're under 30—have picked up—"You are going to have an awesome life and God's going to make that happen for you." And when that doesn't happen—then it's easy for people to chuck their faith and walk away. Actually—whether you are younger or older—we all have been influenced by this promise that Christianity can give you everything the secular world can give but with a Christian veneer. Even if you are a Bible nerd and serious about following Jesus, there's still a bit of this "good life" life mindset that has crept into your thinking. And so—many of us—when we try to live our lives—when we try to make decisions—when we try to be relational—when we try to be good people—we do it without some of the basic building blocks that Christianity has given us. And this short letter that we call 2 Peter deals with these things.*

2 Peter is intense and passionate—it's Peter's "last will and testament." God has told Peter that his time on earth is coming to a close so he writes again to his exile friends who are living in a society that's growing more and more hostile to their faith. He offers them a message of hope by reminding them of some of the building blocks of their faith. He also warns them about false teaching and the dangers of moral compromise. As in his first letter, Peter continues to challenge these believers to keep growing in their faith, love, and service to God. He continues to call them to hang on to the living hope they have in Jesus and the future he has promised them. But whereas Peter's first letter dealt with threats to faith coming from outside the church. His second letter deals with threats coming from false teachers inside the church. Peter reminds his readers of the basics of Gospel Christianity by warning his friends about corrupt teachers who are leading the Christian communities astray with their way of life and distorted theology. These false teachers are challenging foundational Christian beliefs—challenging apostolic doctrine. They accuse Peter and the apostles of making up cleverly devised fables about Jesus and his coming back to judge the world and make all things new. ... We don't really know much about what these teachers were teaching except that they were teaching people that Jesus was not coming back and there's no future judgment (3:7). We also know from 2:19 that they pushed the freedom and grace we have in Christ to an extreme. They had become slaves of greed, sensual passion and immorality (cf:2:13-14) If you are determined to live outside of God's will—it's not difficult to understand why you would change your theology to accommodate your sinful lifestyle. ...The main problem is one of authority. The question being—*Is God's Word the final authority in my life or are my feelings the final authority?* ...This parallels a problem in our day. It's very easy to see the entirety of our faith through the lens of how we feel. We live in a time where we've been taught to express everything through our feelings. We're told, "Trust your

instincts, follow your heart, “trust your gut, it’s never wrong.” And the belief behind all these things is that your feelings are your final authority. ... And when we bring this into our faith, then we increasingly put the accent on *feeling our faith*. *Don’t get me wrong—faith is not opposed to feelings, but your faith is supposed to inform your feelings*. However, that can get turned around and *our feelings end up determining our faith*. And so when life changes and circumstances change, and your feelings change, then it can *feel like* the content of your faith has changed and the scary thing is—maybe it has. if you adopt the “follow- your-heart/trust-your-feelings/good-life” mantra of the world, overtime it will change your theology into a “God wants me happy”—“God will give me my dreams”—“I know what God says, but God is a God of grace I can get forgiveness later”—kind of corrupt theology. And that is important because what I want you to see is that threat coming from inside the church in Peter’s day is not that different from the threat comes against us today. Because again, the false teaching both then and now boils down to this question: *Who has final authority in our lives? What has final authority in our lives? Here’s how Peter answers that question. Remember, the main accusation against Peter and the apostles is that Jesus isn’t coming back to judge the world—you guys just made all this up.*”

Read 1:16-18 — In this this passage, Peter says—“We saw a preview of King Jesus’ future, coming with power glory on the holy mountain. Therefore, I can speak confidently about Jesus’ promise that he will come back to judge the world and that’s one of the building blocks of your faith that we have proclaimed to you. Hold on to it.” And by implication he’s saying—“You false teachers are the ones who are making stuff up. You’re the ones inventing cleverly devised *lies* that are leading people astray and you’d better wake up and repent.” ...Peter says, “On the holy mountain we heard God’s voice, but he goes on to tell us that there’s another voice we should listen to and that is the voice of the prophets in the Jewish Scriptures (our OT).

Read 1:19-20 — Three anchor points about Scripture

- (1) Scripture is based on historical eyewitness testimony.
- (2) All Scripture is the inspired Word of God.
- (3) Scripture is without error.

So Peter is saying, Scripture—the *written eyewitness accounts of the apostles telling who Jesus is, what’s he’s done, and what it looks like to trust and follow him*—our NT—AND—the *written prophecies we find in the Jewish Scriptures that point us forward to Jesus—from the writings of Moses all the way to the prophecies of Malachi*—our OT—it is all true. And that means, Scripture is our final authority for what it means to live daily in a personal relationship with God.

And so, Peter says to his readers and to us” Pay attention to God’s word and don’t be misled by the “feel good” mantras of your times”. Any one of us can be misled by false teachings—by these “What I *feel* is right”/“What I *believe* is right for me” world we live in, but that also lives in all of us to some extent. Pay attention: If you make what you feel more important than what God says, you will be misled. Spiritually, emotionally, relationally, you’ll be in the dark, enslaved to dictates of your feelings. So..

- (1) Pay attention to what you \_\_\_\_\_ to.
- (2) Pay attention to God’s word by \_\_\_\_\_ to hear God speak.

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## Discussion Starters

Have someone read 2 Peter 1:16-21

1. How have you seen this “follow your heart, trust your gut—you’re never wrong” mantra played out in your life? ... How have you seen it in media, movies, other people, etc. How has it influenced you?
2. How does the eyewitness testimonies of the apostles provide a firm foundation for our faith?
3. How does Peter’s testimony of what he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration answer the objection of the corrupt teachers that Jesus will not return in power to judge the world and make all things new? ...
4. How did what happened to Peter, James, and John confirm the event of the Transfiguration in a more certain way? What did they see in the Transfiguration that pointed forward to Jesus coming again in power and glory?
5. How does what Peter say about Paul in 3:16 add to our understanding of the inspiration of all Scripture?
6. How will you create space in your life this week to pay more attention to what God says about your life than what you think and feel about your life? ...How can you help each other with that? ...