

EXILES

LIVING IN HOPE
1 & 2 PETER

SERMON TITLE: "The Expectations of Exile"
SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:3-12

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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.

Eugene Peterson writes, "Religion in our time is captured by a tourist mindset. It is understood as a visit to an attractive site to be made when we have adequate leisure—whether the weekly jaunt to church, or a retreat, or a conference. There is a great market for religious experience in our world, but there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship to Christ."

What Peterson is talking about is a specific mindset towards God and his world. He's talking about a set of presumptuous expectations that many have when they think about life with God. And this is exactly what the Apostle Peter is doing in 1 Peter. He wants his friends to know that they are exiles and that living as exiles in exile includes a unique set of expectations that we aren't naturally inclined to. Left to ourselves, we'll likely float to "a tourist mindset" rather than "a long apprenticeship to Christ."

So, how can we, by God's help, change our expectations to be more shaped by our crucified and risen Jesus than by our situation? What does that look like? What if the journey was a part of the destination somehow? What does it mean to have "the expectations of exile"?

In 1 Peter 1:3-12, Peter talks about four connected ideas that seem to add up to "the expectations of exile": a great mercy, a living hope, an inexpressible joy, and a promised grace. Considering the relationship between these things will help us fight against a passive mindset, and instead live boldly into the reality that, because of the gospel, hope lasts longer than pain.

A Great Mercy

If you're a tourist, you might occasionally get a free souvenir here or there. "I got this sticker at the Grand Canyon." Or, "I got this keychain in Texas." Meaning, the tourist mindset might get you to the place where you presume on grace, on that which is free. But there's no room for that if you know that you're an exile. An exile knows that any and all mercy is great mercy because they're outsiders. But in Jesus, God's mercy has given us new life! And this new life has purpose, trajectory, and hope.

A Living Hope

Because of God's mercy to send Jesus, and because of Jesus' defeat of sin and death at the cross and in the resurrection, we now have a living hope. But why does Peter call it a *living* hope? In his resurrection, Jesus launched God's new creation, where death is defeated and we get to reign with him forever. And this new world is guaranteed in the future because it has already broken into the past—that's the meaning of the empty tomb. So, for followers of Jesus, our salvation in the future is as certain as Jesus' resurrection in the past. And it's *living* right now because it's meant to re-organize our lives and priorities as we patiently long for that day of final restoration and redemption. This is what Peter means. The destination changes the expectations, especially in the face of suffering.

An Inexpressible Joy

When Peter talks about joy, he talks about it in the context of being “grieved by various trials.” Meaning, joy can be had, even in the middle of pain. Because the hope of the resurrection is stronger than suffering, our primary disposition towards pain can be, “God, what do you want to teach me in this?” Or, “God, how do you want to use me in this?” Because Jesus has unraveled the power of sin and death, we can lift our heads, and with a deep-seated gladness, look to him— who, “for the joy set before him, endured the cross for us.” And this kind of joy inexpressible in the face of suffering isn’t possible unless you’re an exile with a living hope. This is not a sprint; it’s a marathon.

A Promised Grace

Peter tells his friends the Old Testament prophets looked forward to their day, a day in which, because of the sufferings of Jesus, grace was available. The prophets of old (who were also exiles!) longed for the day of the Christ because they knew that it would bring God’s reign of grace to a broken and rebellious world. Meaning, there have been exiled people before who longed for grace to come, and it did. And this is meant to be an encouragement to Peter’s friends and to us.

When we consider these four ideas, they add up to “the expectations of exile.” An exile knows that they are totally dependent on mercy. An exile knows that Jesus is their only hope. An exile knows that there is joy to be had in the present, even in pain. An exile knows that grace is on the way. And most importantly, an exile knows that these things are so only because of Jesus. He was excluded so that we could belong. He was exiled so that we could be brought into the family. This is the gospel we’re called to believe.

For Discussion —

When you listen to Bible teaching, you should be listening with an ear to learn, but also an ear to share with others what you are learning. Keep that in mind as you discuss today’s message. How do you need to internalize this message so you could share this Good News with people who need to hear it?

1. Which of the four suggested responses is the most natural for you? Why? (Praise... Choose... Reinterpret... Trust...)
2. Which of the four suggested responses is the most difficult for you? Why? (Praise... Choose... Reinterpret... Trust...)
3. What is something in your life about which you have incorrect or unhealthy expectations?
4. Who is someone that you know that embodies Peter’s idea of “a living hope”?
5. Personally, what stood out to you the most about this message?
6. In Peter’s mind and theology, what is the meaning and significance of the resurrection?
7. How does the idea of exile help us to think well about the gospel of Jesus?

Make sure to check out the [Bible Project’s excellent overview video on 1 Peter](#).

As well as their two videos dealing with our being “exiles” in this world.

- [“Exile”](#)
- [“The Way of the Exile”](#)