

# EXILES

LIVING IN HOPE  
1 & 2 PETER

SERMON TITLE: Big Picture Living  
SCRIPTURE: 2 Peter 3:1-10, 13

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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 his great devotional book, *New Morning Mercies*, Paul Tripp writes: "The Bible is a big-picture book that calls us to big-picture living." It's true. The Bible stretches your mind to think about things from before "the beginning of creation" in eternity past all the way to 1000s of 'years' into eternity future. And in so doing, it doesn't permit us to live our lives just for this moment. It doesn't give us permission to shrink our desires and decisions—our thoughts and feelings—our words and actions—down to whatever we need or think we need *right now*. Because *right now*—your thoughts can seem *more important* than they actually are. *Right now*—your feelings can seem *more reliable* than they really are. *Right now*—your needs can seem *more essential* than they really are. But God reminds us that this life is not all there is. He reminds us that we were created and re-created in Christ Jesus for eternity. The problem is, for many of us, eternity, God's future for us doesn't really shape how we live our everyday lives. It's hard to go against the "here-and-now-is-all-you-get-mentality" that rules the day. But according to the Bible, we were made to live with something bigger in view than this present moment's comfort, pleasure, and happiness. We were created to live big-picture lives. And one thing about big-picture living that we don't think much about is that living with eternity in view forces us to face the fact that what we do and say in this life does have consequences. We can believe whatever we want to believe and live however we want to live, but we will face the consequences of poor choices. A day of reckoning is coming that no human being will escape, and realizing *that* reality infuses today with a moral seriousness that is life-transforming.

Now, all I've just said has a direct bearing on what Peter writes in 2 Peter, chapter 3. False teachers have infiltrated the churches Peter's friends attend and they scoff at the notion that there is more to life than the here-and-now. And because they don't believe in a future judgment, they live lives of greed and lust and sexual immorality. According to their way of thinking, *if there's no future judgment—if we don't have to give an account for how we live*—then we might as well "eat, drink, and party because when you die, you die and that's it." So in chapter 3, Peter reminds his friends and us of the Bible's big picture. He reminds them that everything taught in the Jewish Scriptures and by Jesus through his apostles can be trusted and must stand as the foundation for their faith. So Peter vv3-10 give us a series of reminders geared to contradict the lies of the false teachers. He reminds us of something the Scriptures teach about the *present* (vv3-4); then he reminds us of something the Scriptures teach about the *past*—(vv5-6), and finally, he reminds us of something the Scriptures teach about the *future* (vv7-10).

First, remember what the Scriptures teach about the *present* (3:3-4)—"In the last days scoffers will come with scoffing, following their sinful desires." (cf Jude 1:4, 17-19; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Second, remember what the Scriptures teach about the *past* (3:5-6). The scoffers say that God is not a God of judgment and that he doesn't intervene in history. However, Genesis teaches us that God did intervene and judge the world in Noah's day through the great flood.

Third, remember what the Scriptures teach about the *future* (3:7-10). In Noah's day, God's word and water brought judgment upon the world. In the same way, God's word and fire will bring judgment upon the world in a future day of judgment. ...But the "day of the Lord" is not simply about judgment. After judgment, God inaugurates his eternal kingdom

come to earth (see 3:13). This is our living hope that Peter's been talking about. This is our true home. That's why we are to view ourselves as exiles living in this world.

But the scoffers are saying—"The apostles have been telling us that we are living in 'the last days for 30 years' and nothing's happened. Thirty years is a long time. Wise up. Jesus is not coming back." But Peter responds—"The way we mark time is irrelevant to our eternal God." *To God, a thousand years are like a day and a day like a 1000 years.* In saying this, Peter is not giving us some secret key to unlock prophecy that will enable us to come up with a formula to set a date for the end of the world. He's simply making the point that 30 years is nothing on God's timeline, just as 2000 years for us, means nothing on God's timeline. So why doesn't God just "call time" and get on with restoring this broken world to what he always wanted? Peter tells us why in verse 9. God is deliberately holding back his judgment in order to give time for all who will be saved to be saved. Scripture tells us that God already knows *how many* and *who* will be saved and when that number is fulfilled, the end will come. *But why is it taking him so long?* Because, obviously, there have been men and women in every generation since Jesus ascended back into heaven that God predetermined would be saved. So he has been patient, allowing time for them to be saved, and however many years remain until, as Paul says, *the full number of Gentiles are saved* (Rom 11:24-25)—however many years that is—will be the number of years God has determined that he will allow for all who will be saved to be saved. That's why Peter says in v15—"Count the patience of our Lord as salvation." Or as the NLT puts it—"Remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved." So, we must hold fast to God's promise that final judgment will come and at the same time, rejoice in God's patience that gives time for all who will be saved to be saved.

The point of this passage is this: Big Picture living forces us to face the fact that what we believe and do has consequences. The delusion of the scoffers is: *What we choose to do and say doesn't really make much difference. The delusion is that I can choose to do whatever I want and things will be okay. The delusion is what I think is best for me IS best for me regardless of what God has to say about it.* The scoffers believed—*God doesn't judge us—God doesn't discipline us—what we do doesn't really matter to God—so we can live for ourselves and not for God, and things will be okay.*

But the big picture Peter paints for us in this text exposes that delusion for what it is. This passage teaches us that we live in a moral universe under the care of a perfectly loving and holy God. It teaches us that God does judge—he does discipline—and we all have to answer to him. Listen: Grace doesn't mean you can live for yourself and it doesn't matter to God. In fact Titus 2:12 says: "Grace teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and sinful pleasures and to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life in these last days." *Do you know why Jesus died for you?* 2 Cor 5:15—He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died and rose again on their behalf." Do you see that the Cross of Christ forever stands as a memorial to the fact that how we live matters to God? Jesus died to save us from sin—to save us from ourselves—from living for ourselves—he died to save us from our own stupidity in believing that how we live doesn't matter. The Cross means sin has consequences and Jesus took the consequences of our sin on himself so that we can live free, looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has prepared for all who trust in him.

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#### Discussion Starters —Have someone read 2 Peter 3:10, 13

1. In your own words, explain what Paul Tripp means when he says, "The Bible is a big-picture book for big-picture living."
2. How does that idea help us understand 2 Peter 3:10, 13?
3. We know that this life is not all there is. So why is it so easy to get caught up in thinking that "right now" is all that matters? What does it mean that we were created to live big-picture lives?
4. What do verses 1-2 tell us about our Bibles?
5. What do the Scriptures tell us about the present (3:3-4)?
6. What do the Scriptures tell us about the past (3:5-6)?
7. What do the Scriptures tell us about the future (3:7-10, 13)?
8. How does Peter confront the objection that Jesus isn't coming back because it's been a long time and he still hasn't returned (3:8-9)? Why is God being patient when the pain and suffering and evil in this world just gets worse and worse?
9. Be real here. When are you most tempted to think that you can live your way rather than God's way and it won't make any difference?
10. What does the Cross teach us about the consequences of sin?