

Living as Elect Exiles

1 Peter: Hope Away from Home

1 Peter 1:13-21

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February 9, 2020

Good morning First Free! My name is Jordan Krahn. I'm the High School Pastor. We're on week two in the book of 1 Peter. It's been fun studying 1 Peter in preparation for our sermon series. And I'm excited to study Peter's letter with you.

I wanted to start today off by telling you a little about my family. So when Holly and I were newly engaged she told me something I didn't believe. Holly said, "When we're married, we're going with my family to Disney World every year." Every year. Every 365 days. Every time the earth revolves around the sun. I thought she was exaggerating. I didn't think she really meant it. People don't do that.

But every fall here's our family's experience: We're in the Disney bubble. We're in this separate Disney paradise. So it's me, Holly, Jude, Harper, and my mother-in-law, Susan, who graciously takes us to Disney. And we wear hats with big Mickey ears. We eat Mickey Bars. We wait in line to meet the big mouse himself, the boss of Disney. We meet Mickey about twenty times. We ride amazing rides: Splash Mountain, Spaceship Earth, The Haunted Mansion, Space Mountain, Test Track, Seven Dwarfs Mine Train, Pirates of the Caribbean. Every employee is smiling and waving. Everything is almost perfect. The exclusive Disney bubble is really great.

Our trips to Florida are great. They're really special for us. And we look forward to them every year. But we don't see the real Florida. I have no relationships with Floridians. I don't worry about hurricanes. I've never even seen an alligator in Florida. As tourists, we're passing through. And as tourists, we're separated from real life. We're in a bubble. And my family's experience as tourists is an image for how Christians often relate to the world.

This is an image of separation. We're tempted to separate from what God calls us to engage. We're tempted to live in a Christian bubble. I know this is true for me. I work with Christians. I've got amazing Christian friends. We're considering sending our son to a Christian school. I love Christian chicken at Chick-Fil-A. We say "thank you." They say what? ["My pleasure."] Wichita can be my own personal Disney World. I live like a tourist. I'm tempted to just separate from our broken world. I keep at a distance what God wants to restore. And I can take this tourist attitude to my neighborhood too. And I'm disengaged from non-believing neighbors. I'm not friends with those across the street who Jesus came to seek. I don't know those living a few feet away that Jesus wants to save. So often we're tourists traveling through this world. We're in a Christian bubble. We're separated. We're like tourists.

So clearly the goal isn't to live in a Christian bubble. We're to love the lost. We're to show the love of Jesus to a hurting world. We're to share the gospel. But what's a potential pitfall in an opposite direction? A second image Josh briefly mentioned last week could be an immigrant losing distinctiveness. This is an image of conformity. We're tempted to wrongly embrace culture. I've seen acculturation in my own family. As a kid I remember my grandpa knowing a dialect of German. My grandpa learned German from his parents. And they learned German from their parents. But especially during World War II, the pressure was to abandon German. Fit in. Speak English.

Germany is bad. So my family adapted. Now there's no German fluency. We lost this distinctiveness. We learned English. Isn't losing our distinctiveness a massive pressure for Christians? The pressure is to conform. To live like this world is our permanent home. To treat this world like we're never leaving. To lose our distinctiveness. To look just like the non-believing world. We're like immigrants acculturating.¹

So what's the third option? Because as we know, the Christians that Peter addresses were facing immense pressure. They're dispersed all over what is now modern-day Turkey. They are going through trials. They are mocked for their faith. They are made fun of for believing in Jesus. Should they retreat from society? Should they follow Jesus separated from those who mock? Or should they try to fit in? Maybe not rock the boat? Give up their distinctives?

Peter's third image is exile. Exiles make a home far from their true home. Exiles long to return home. They long to go back. Exiles are a distinct people. They don't belong. Exiles are outsiders. For Christians as exiles, our home here is temporary. We're far from our true home. Our heavenly home awaits us. But how are we to live as exiles? How should our lives be shaped by our exile?

Here's our big idea as we're studying 1 Peter. Here's what I'm hoping you'll walk away with today: We're to live in light of our hope and identity.

And as we read our text in 1 Peter, we'll see three ways to live in light of our hope and identity.

1 Peter 1:13-21²

¹³Therefore, 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. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." ¹⁷And 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, ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

This is the word of the Lord.

HOPE IN JESUS' RETURN (V. 13).

So Peter gives three ways to live as exiles. Three ways to live in light of our hope and identity. Here's the first way Peter calls us to live. In verse 13 Peter tells us to hope in Jesus' return. We're to long for Jesus to come back. We're to live anticipating his return.

Peter begins telling us why we should hope in Jesus' return. He begins our section with a "therefore." The word "therefore" roots our hope in last week's teaching. So let's root our hope in verses 1-12. Last week Peter brought together two truths. The first truth was our identity in Jesus. We're elected by God for faith in the gospel. We're chosen to trust in Jesus' death. God chose us to believe in Jesus' resurrection. And God's will was for the believer's hope of an inheritance. An inheritance of eternal life. As believers, we have great privilege! The second truth Peter shared was

¹ Introduction adapted from J.D. Greear, Battlefront: 1 Peter 1:13-21, October 30, 2011.

² Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® unless otherwise noted.

about our exile. As Christians we don't belong. We're rejected. We're mocked. We face trials. So because believers are elect and because believers are in exile, therefore believers should hope.

So how should they live? How are these saved exiles to live? Peter tells his readers to get their minds ready. In verse 13 he says, "preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded." Peter's says to prepare your minds. And this contains vibrant imagery. Preparing your minds for action literally means gird up your loins. Well what's a loin? And how do I gird one up? Well in the ancient Near East, men wore robes. And men would have to gird their robes for battle. Or men would gird the robes for running. You're tucking in a long robe. You're preparing to fight. You're getting ready to run. It's like saying, roll up your sleeves! Get your head in the game! Get ready! Their minds needed to be clear. Their minds needed to be focused. Their minds needed to be prepared. But focused on what? How should they be focused?

Peter shows us how our minds should be focused. We must be ready for Jesus' return. In verse 13, Peter gives the main command, "Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." As exiles, they suffered. They were rejected. They were losing hope. But Peter commands them to "set your hope..." They were to hope in Jesus' return. They were to hope in Jesus' coming. They should long for Jesus to come back. In verse 13, that's the main command Peter wants to emphasize.

But what is the revelation of Jesus? Why is the revelation of Jesus hope for us exiles? At Jesus' return, God will restore heaven and earth. We will have a new heaven and a new earth. No more sin. No more sickness. No more death. Pure joy. The curse is gone. Heaven and earth restored. And believers will inherit this eternal hope. Believers will enjoy the new heaven and earth. No more exile! We'll be home! Home at last! We'll explore. We'll worship. We'll build. We'll connect. We'll enjoy all of creation's beauty. And we'll experience none of the curse. And we as exiles have this hope at the revelation of Jesus.

As exiles, we have hope at Jesus' return. An image that illustrates our hope involves a dot and a line. The dot represents our exile. For a brief time we're outsiders. For a short time, we don't belong. It begins. It ends. It's brief. For a hundred years, we're exiles. But imagine a line that extends forever. The line goes beyond our worship center. And we can see it extending for hundreds of miles beyond. The line represents the hope of Jesus' return. The line represents the new heaven and new earth. For eternity we have great hope. Our heavenly hope is imperishable, undefiled, unfading. The grace we'll experience at Jesus' return will last forever. In two hundred years...unending joy. In one thousand years...the beauty of heaven. In one million years...no more sin, sickness, death. For the rejected believer, you have great hope at Jesus' return! The line shows us our hope. And the line is so much greater than the dot!³



How should the line affect us? What does our hope mean for right now? Hope should push us to be okay with minor embarrassment in loving the lost. So this past Sunday I took a baby step to love the lost. The weather was glorious. The Super Bowl was even more glorious! Our community group was watching the Super Bowl at our house. Things were cleaned up and ready. And so Jude and I were in the front yard throwing a Frisbee. My neighbor came outside. I remembered just being challenged to grow in my love for the lost. Also, hope in 1 Peter is on my mind. I want to live in light of the line. I want to hope in Jesus' return. I want my neighbor to have the hope of Jesus' return. So I wanted to be hospitable, and to get to know them. So I invited them. To confess, my mind was racing. I felt

³ Illustration adapted from Randy Alcorn, *Treasure Principle*.

awkward. I asked awkwardly. And he said no. Well I was a glutton for punishment. So an hour later, I awkwardly asked again, “Are you sure?” Once again, he said no. Awkward. Rejected. I felt like a loser. Now, I didn’t share the gospel. There was no repentance in sackcloth and ashes. But we endure embarrassment because we’ve got the line! We endure social embarrassment because we’ve got hope! Jesus will return! We’ve got the joy of heaven. And we want our neighbors to have that joy too! So we’ve got hope, even in the smallest rejections, to share your faith.

LIVE LIKE OUR HOLY FATHER (V. 14-16).

So first, we looked at hoping in Jesus’ return. Let’s look at the next way we’re to live in exile. In verse 14-16, Peter says we’re to live like our holy Father. We’re to follow our Father’s example. We’re to imitate our holy God.

Peter commands holiness in verse 15 when he says, “be holy in all your conduct...” So what is holiness? What does Peter mean when he commands us to be holy? Holiness is to be set apart. It’s to be separated from that which defiles. It’s separated from impurity.

But what exactly about us is to be holy? What is he asking us to set apart? In verse 15, Peter writes “...be holy in all your conduct...” Our life is to be set apart. The word “conduct” is repeated six times in the letter. Set-apart conduct is an important theme for our letter. Our conduct must be different. Our way of living is to be holy. When we obey Jesus’ commands, we’re set apart. We’re to be set apart from our culture. Set apart from society. We’re not supposed to be normal. We’re supposed to be weird. We’re aliens. We’re strangers. We’re exiles.

So what does holiness mean for Peter’s audience? What does holiness look like practically? Peter gives clarity to holiness in verse 14, “do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance...” Holiness means we can’t live like we did before Jesus. Holiness abandons our life from before. We deny those desires. We fight those desires. We reject what we wanted before. And we obey what Jesus commands.

But why should we be holy? What’s our motivation? What’s the reason for holiness? Holiness is about being like our heavenly Father. In verse 16, Peter quotes the Old Testament saying: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Our Father’s an example. He’s a model. He’s fully good. Why should we be holy? We’re reflecting our Father.

Thinking about following our heavenly Father’s example reminds me of my father. As kids, my dad drove a 1983 Toyota pickup. This baby was a stick shift. It had four cylinders of fury. It had a tape deck to play the latest cassettes. And my dad loved this truck. But a truck that holds two people total wasn’t great with kids. So he sold it. My dad still loved the truck. He thought it was reliable. He wanted another one. So when we were old enough, guess what my brother bought? A red Toyota pickup truck. When I was old enough, guess what I bought? A white Toyota pickup truck. We wanted to be just like our father.

Holiness is an invitation to be like our heavenly Father. But often holiness feels like a killjoy. You can’t do this. You can’t do that. Stop this. Stop that. But holiness is more than following rules. Holiness is the joy of following our dad’s example! When you have God as Father, you want to be like him. The Father’s generous, so you’re generous. The Father’s loving, so you’re loving. The Father’s forgiving, so you’re forgiving. The Father’s holy, so you’re holy. We’re following the Father’s example.

LIVE IN LIGHT OF JESUS' RANSOM (VV. 17-21).

So we've seen we're to hope in Jesus' return. We're to live like our heavenly Father. Here's the third way exiles with the hope of Jesus are to live. In verses 17-21, Peter says we're to live in light of Jesus' ransom. We're to live in light of Jesus' shed blood. Our lives are to be gospel-shaped.

Peter gives a second command for holy lives in verse 17: "Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile..." The main command in verses 17-21 is "conduct." We're to conduct ourselves with fear. What does Peter mean by fear? Fear is awe. It's respect. Fear trusts God. Fear obeys God. It's a second call to holy lives.

But what's our motivation? Why should we live with awe and respect? Peter looks at two brief motivations for holiness, or two brief reasons for living with fear. He looks at how God is both Father and judge. Peter says in verse 17, "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds..." The first brief motivation is that God is Father. We have a relationship with God. We're in God's family. We're able to pray to the Father. God is dad. And the second brief reason is that the Father judges impartially. We'll all face judgement one day. We can't be flippant about God. We can't be casual about God. Even believers stand before God as judge. Knowing God as Father does not negate him as judge. Yes, we're in the family room now. But one day we'll be in the courtroom too. One day we'll stand in judgment. So we should live with awe and respect.

Now let's look at Peter's main motivation for holy lives in verses 17-21. Why should we live with fear? Why should we live with awe? Peter's main motivation for holy living in this passage is found in verses 18-19: "knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ..." So what's our third motivation? Jesus' ransom is our third motivation for holy lives. Jesus' blood was shed. He died on the cross. He died in our place. And Jesus ransoms us from sin. He ransoms us from Satan. He ransoms us from the wrath of God. And Jesus' ransom motivates our holy lives.

So what exactly is a ransom? What does it mean that we're ransomed from our sins? Ransom refers to a payment. It's a payment to free a slave. In the ancient Near East, slaves often bought their own freedom. The slave would earn enough money, they would go to the temple of a god or goddess, and they would pay their owner through the temple. The payment was a ransom to free the slave. Through the ransom payment slaves were set free. And Jesus' blood is the ransom payment to set us free.

What does ransom mean for us? Ransom teaches us about ourselves. Apart from faith in Jesus, we're slaves who need to be set free. Slaves to Satan. Slaves to sin. Slaves to idols. Slaves to eternity apart from God. And Jesus' blood is the payment to free us from slavery. Jesus sets us free. And this freedom is why we obey.

So the gospel saves. The gospel is our hope. But the gospel also transforms. The gospel propels obedience. How can we illustrate gospel transformation? An image that connects Jesus' ransom and our obedience is a train. Imagine with me an elevated track. Two massive lines of steel brought together to make the track, a line of trees on both sides of the track, and a train coming down the track. The train is a mile long. The train has coal cars. It has covered cars. It has fuel cars. There is a massive diesel-powered engine driving the train. The tracks of a train could represent our obedience,

our holy conduct. They represent the way we should live. But the tracks don't drive the train. The tracks don't propel the train forward. The tracks aren't moving the train along.

The engine could represent the gospel. Jesus' death is to be the engine that moves us down the track of obedience. Jesus' shed blood is to be the power driving us down the path of holiness. The gospel drives us to live set-apart lives.

If the gospel propels obedience, how should we respond? What should we do if Jesus' ransom should drive our conduct? It's so easy to white-knuckle the call to holy lives. It's tempting to just try to do better. Try harder. Give it more effort. But our eyes shouldn't be set on obedience. Our eyes should be set on Jesus' ransom for us. Jesus sees our continual sin. Continual failure. Continual rebellion. Continual rejection of his Word. And through faith, through trust, through resting in the gospel, Jesus gives us the freedom of a perfect righteousness. Jesus gives us the freedom of him looking at us as though we've never sinned. As though we've always kept his law. As though we've perfectly followed him. He gives us the freedom of adoption as sons. He gives us freedom from hell. And he gives us the freedom of eternal heaven. Our freedom in Jesus should fuel us down the tracks of obedience. We shouldn't look to our efforts. We should look to Jesus!

Conclusion

To conclude, I want to bring us back to where we started. Like tourists, we're tempted to be removed from our broken world. We're tempted to live in a Christian bubble. We're tempted to separate. Or similar to immigrants acculturating, we're tempted to conform. We're tempted to live with no distinction. We're tempted to live like our non-believing neighbors. I want you to discuss with your community group, or family over lunch, at what times you fall into these ditches. When do you wrongly conform or remove?

We're called to live as exiles. We're outsiders. We're weird. We're aliens. But we've got the hope of returning home. We've got the hope of Jesus' return. We have a certain hope. I also want you to discuss with your community group or family where you need to grow in embracing your identity as an exile. Where do you need to more readily embrace a distinctly Christian call to life? And what could be a step to do so?