

This Exiled Life – part 2

How to Survive as an Exile: You need HOPE!

I Peter 1:3-5

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³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵why by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3–5 (ESV)

Last week we started a new series on I Peter, focusing on living as an exile in the world. I have been intrigued by the idea of exile for some time. It is a theme that most people find intriguing and scary, and is not an uncommon movie theme: Tom Hanks in *Cast Away*, where his plane crashed on an island and his best friend is a volleyball named “Wilson,” and more recently a book and movie, *Unbroken*, focusing on the life of Louis Zamperini. Louis was a runner in the 1936 Olympics, joined the US Army, and his plane was shot down in the Pacific. He survived 47 days in a raft, and months of intense torture by the enemy. He was freed from his captors at the end of the war, but suffered from nightmares of his torture. God in His grace brought him to faith at a Billy Graham crusade, and he was a testimony of freedom from exile by Jesus. The theme of exile is also prevalent in the OT—In Genesis, mankind is exiled as a consequence of sin. In Exodus, the sons of Jacob, who will become the nation of Israel, find themselves in exile in Egypt for 400 years. The northern kingdom of Israel is taken into exile by the Assyrians, and Daniel is one of the promising Israelites who is taken into exile by Babylon. The OT ends with an effort to restore the exiles with Ezra and Nehemiah, but there was not a full restoration with a king and self-government. When Jesus came, Israel wanted a Messiah who would restore them to their glory, but His idea of glory was different.

This week we will look at verses 3-5 of Peter's letter to the exiles. Peter is encouraging them to thrive and prosper, even though they are not in a comfortable life. Look at the text and enjoy the beauty of the words and thoughts. What do you think are some of the key words in the text? There are many, but toward the top of the list is the word “HOPE.” Peter wants to give his readers hope in their exile. Hope in the lexicon is defined as expectancy, or a confidence that there is purpose and value to life. The exile needs hope to survive, and Peter gives the basis for hope in this passage.

I Peter 1:3-5 assumes three questions that will determine your level of hope:

1. Who is in charge? Answer: God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 3a)

¹ Disclaimer—Sorry, I do not preach from the manuscript. Hopefully it can help some to follow the outline.

Peter begins this first point with the easy and clear words “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is an easy clause to breeze past. Yea, yea ... God is the Father of Jesus. BUT---let that sink in as an exile. If we want to have hope while in exile, the object of our hope is of upmost importance. Peter says that God is blessed. He is probably writing in good Jewish fashion: in the synagogue it was common to pray or recite (sometimes in silence) eighteen benedictions or blessings, which start with a blessing to God for who He is.

God is God! God is blessed forever. He is blessed for being GOD. We would run out of paper and ink if we tried to list all the blessedness of God. He is sovereign, immortal, invisible, infinite, independent, immutable, unchangeable, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, just, holy, etc. (and that is a *big* etc.). God is all that and more: He is GOD!!! –and that should be an encouragement to an exile. Blessed be God.

The text continues and says blessed be the God “AND Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He is not merely an abstract deity of limitless power. He is not the “Force” or the “unmoved mover.” *He is a person (Father) and has always been a person.* This little phrase brings out a beautiful and encouraging aspect of the nature of God: He is a father, but it is not a father exactly like we think of human fathers. From eternity past, God was Father and Son. There was a relationship in the true God. He loves His Son, who exists in eternity and shares in His character. When the Bible says that God loved the world and sent His Son, we need to understand that He loved His Son first—that is the wonder of His love. God loves His Son like any Father, except greater than any earthly father. As exiles, we have hope because we look up to a God who is not only unbelievably greater than what we can imagine, in power and authority, but also more loving and kind than we can ever imagine. That brings hope.

Application:

- **Who is your God?** The goal of an exile in this world is to know the true God. Many gods vie for our allegiance in this exile world. We must take inventory of our lives to determine what idols have taken His place, as we are exiles in a world of many gods. God is jealous and draws us to Himself alone-- The Bible draws us to want to know God, who is all we need.
- **Knowing God is not merely theoretical.** A great truth about God has helped me navigate the struggles of being an exile on my hardest days: He is sovereign. I am responsible to be faithful to Him, but in the end, He is sovereign over nations, people, events, and all of life. That gives me hope when I am tempted to despair. I can wake up on my worst day and have hope in a sovereign God who is love. I also love that this sovereign God knows how to be a Father. He has had a lot of practice, and is a perfect Father for His children.

2. Who are you and who is your father? Answer—Your identity is in your genes (verse 3b)

Peter goes on in verse 3 (verses 3-5 is 1 sentence in the Greek text), with a new development. He says “according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...” The key action of this section is the idea of causing us to be born again. The word used for

“born again” has the idea of conception, rather than birth. The King James translates it “begotten.” The idea is that God has children, and they are those who are begotten by Him. He fathers them. As exiles, we can find comfort in the fact that the Father of Jesus is our Father, as we have trusted in Him. The word is only used here, and in verse 23, where Peter says we are begotten by imperishable seed. We are the children of God, and that makes all the difference in the world of an exile. I can look at my birth certificate and see that God is my Father—that brings hope. That is my identity.

Peter gives three prepositions to further describe this idea of being “begotten of God:”

It is “according to his great mercy”

God begets us, not because of our goodness, but because of His mercy. This word for mercy is used over 400 times in the OT, and 78 times in the NT. It has the idea of compassion and pity that causes the one showing mercy to be inclined to the object of mercy. It is more than merely withholding wrath—it is the act of showing mercy and compassion. My wife is adopted, and often mentions how grateful she is that her parents showed mercy to her and adopted her on the day she was born. Even more so we, as exiles, are grateful that God is great in mercy to give life to us.

“to a living hope”

This new birth (or conception) produces a living hope. Hope is an expectancy that what is happening is for good. That hope can falter when life’s circumstances do not live up to our expectations. The promise of our Father is that we will have living hope. He fathered us to have hope in HIM. It is not static. There is enough hope and mercy for each day. The prophet Jeremiah (a prophet of exile) said His “mercies are new every morning.” Christ’s blood is in us, and that is the hope of glory. It reminds me of my newest granddaughter, Grace. She was born in February, and we saw her about three days after she was born. We were with her for four nights in February, and in her is my life. She awakes daily (and sometimes nightly) as a reminder of living hope. We awake as a reminder that our Father’s blood is in us, and He will never desert us in exile. It is a living hope.

“through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

Not only is our new life from the Father because of His mercy, and produces a living hope, it has the best basis ever: our new life comes from the one who conquered death and gives life in His resurrection. Jesus became the ultimate exile on the cross. He said, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” In that moment, He experienced the ultimate reality of exile. He did that for you and me. If that were the end of the story, we would have no hope. Saturday after the crucifixion was a long day for planet earth, BUT-Sunday came and Jesus conquered death and rose from the dead; He conquered exile. The life we have from the Father is possible through the life giving wonder of the resurrected Jesus. A theologian said “we live life forward, but understand it backward.” If Jesus endured exile for us, suffered for us, AND if He conquered death and really rose from the dead, that makes all the difference. The Father then can give life to his children, and that is living and eternal hope.

Application:

We need to stop and think about this hope of the exile. We have a Father who has given us life. So what??

- My identity is in God my Father. In all times of life, my default perspective is that God is my Father—how then should I live?
- If I am not a child of God—I need to trust in HIM.
- We who are brothers and sisters need to live in unity—marriage, church members, etc.
- The life of the Father should unify ethnically diverse children.
- You should stay in the family—marry only brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Our identity should be in our Father, not in our gender, sexual preference, financial status, etc. We are His before we are anything else.
- We should seek to be agents of reproduction—bring people to God to give them new life.

3. What does my future look like? Answer: Really good! (verses 5-6)

This is the best part of Christian hope. I get a bit tired of convincing myself that hard things in life are the best. I do know they are necessary, essential, and good because God tells me so. But—the hope of the believing exile is that God is going to fix it all in the end, and that we will be able to participate in that renewed world to God's glory. That is our hope's destiny. Peter uses the word "inheritance" to describe the wonderful future hope of the Christian. What does this inheritance look like? It is different than the inheritance my parents left me, and the inheritance I will leave for my kids. My parents died before I received my inheritance, and my kids need me gone before they will receive theirs.

In these 2 packed verses, there are at least four wonderful descriptions of our future hope:

It is of eternal value

The three words used to describe this inheritance is "*imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.*" It does not go away. Other phrases to describe it would be: does not decay, is unstained by sin, does not lose its glow. Some illustrations of these three words are: it is not like the mouse that fell in between our walls and decayed and stunk, it is not like the bread that fell down behind the refrigerator and was covered with mold, and it is not like my nice new shirt that fades in color when it is worn and washed. It is always perfect. That gives hope to exiles.

It is secure

"Kept in heaven for you." It is great security to know that our inheritance is secure—it is kept in the vault of heaven—it does not get more secure than that! We keep our will in a "safe" that is fire proof and indestructible – or so they say. Our future inheritance it in a better safe box—heaven.

We are secure

Not only is our inheritance secure, but we are secure as well. Peter says “who by God’s power are being guarded by faith for a salvation.” Not only is our inheritance secure, but so are we. God keeps His own. We are in His hand. He loves His children and is their guardian. He keeps us secure as we trust in Him (faith).

We will not have to wait forever

The text ends with “ready to be revealed in the last time.” This is a good and difficult phrase. When we are in the hard land of exile, we want it to end now. That is understandable. It is like the kids on a long trip saying “are we there yet?” Everyone wants to get there, but the parents know the wait will be worth it. God has the end in sight, and we can be hopeful and confident that His timing is RIGHT.

It is great to realize we have a reason for hope as exiles. **God is God**, He is in control, He is personal and almighty, He is the one who give us life, and we have His blood. **He is our Dad**, and that is a great hope. **HE also assures us of our final destiny**, and that exile will not be forever.

I have a final question: *What is the inheritance we all are hoping for?*

Is it a gold street, a big house, a perfect health record, or you fill in the blank? I believe those are part of our hope—pain will be over, the curse will be reversed, and there will be perfect peace and shalom. BUT—I think the biggest reality of our inheritance is that we will inherit life with Jesus. He *is* our inheritance. He is kept for us and we are kept for Him. In verse 8 of this chapter, we are told that “though we do not see him we love him.” Heaven will be heaven because of Jesus. Our hope is to be eternally with Him in glory. That is worth it all.

As an exile that has been at it for a while, three songs come to mind. When I was young, I heard a child with downs syndrome sing “It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus.” I had tears in my eyes as an exile with physical struggles sang about wanting to see Jesus. When my Mom died in 2003, Eric sang “Give Me Jesus”—and the lyric “when I come to die, give me Jesus” stood out. I recently heard my three-year-old grandson sing “Bless the Lord o my soul.” He only sings the chorus, but the last verse says:

*And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore
Forevermore
Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name*

We have great reason for hope, fellow exiles. Let's keep singing the great songs of Zion as we march toward the heavenly kingdom, and find our peace and hope in our great Father.

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