

Living with Hope in Exile

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[0 : 0 0] Great. Thank you, guys. Welcome. My name is Chris. I'm, again, one of the elders here at Watermark. If you have your booklet open, I encourage you to follow along in the Scripture passage.

Keep this with you. If you've got a pen, write notes in it, because we're going to be going on this journey in 1 Peter over the next few weeks. And I'm excited about this book that we're going to go through together.

We were in Thailand a couple of years ago, and Fiona and I were going out kayaking in the sea. And as we'd gone out a little way, we capsized. The boat overturned, and we realized we couldn't turn the boat back over. And then I had this strange feeling, but we were being dragged out by the current out into the sea. It was a frightening moment. And at that point, both of us realized we had to fight with all of our strength to swim with the boat to get back to shore, because our lives were at stake. But I don't know whether you have ever felt, if you were a Christian, like you're this small minority swimming against the current of society, a society which seems at times to have very different values, to have very different ways of thinking, to live for very different things than the gospel calls us to. And sometimes it feels like it's easier to go with the flow. And so as we saw from the video, we see how people are thinking in the world around us. And yet, as we come through this series, and we want to look in this series at 1 Peter, we want to see that actually God has called us to be a countercultural, a swimming against the tide community.

And that's really what the book of 1 Peter is about. Because the book of 1 Peter is set in Turkey. Now, you can see on the screen, Turkey, we went there this year with a few of us, a couple of us from Watermark. And what happened is after Pentecost, when God's Spirit came upon God's people, there were Jews from all around the area, including places like Cappadocia, and Asia, and Pontus. And what you see is 30 years later, the gospel and the church has started to spread.

The gospel has started spreading. It's reached into Turkey, and small little house churches have started springing up in the midst of the Roman Empire, people who are trusting in Jesus as their savior. And we visited a couple of these places last year. Cappadocia, it's an amazing place if you ever get to go there. Asia is where Ephesus and where a lot of the New Testament is written into.

[3 : 1 1] And the apostle Peter is writing from Rome. And he's writing to these small minority groups in Rome of people who feel like they're just swimming against the current of a Roman Empire, which seems to stand against them. You know, this is just a couple of years before the Roman Emperor Nero burnt the city of Rome to try and get planning permission to rebuild a great palace for himself.

And he blamed it on the Christians. And hundreds of Christians, including the apostle Peter, were executed during that time. This is just a couple of years written before that time.

And it's a time where everyone around thought they were really tolerant. You see, they had hundreds of gods. If you ever go to Turkey, you'll see temples everywhere.

And they'll accept any gods, except you can't be too exclusive. If you say there's only one god, and you say there's only one way to god, well, that's intolerance.

And they also called Christians atheists. Because if you went to the company dinner, you were expected to bow down and put some incense to the goddess of fertility, Artemis, or the god of wine, Bacchus. But Christians wouldn't do that.

[4 : 31] You know, we go to the cinema and watch people killing each other on the screen. They would go to the amphitheater and watch gladiators killing each other in the flesh. But the Christians wouldn't go.

Men would go to the baths and pick up prostitutes down there to play around with. But Christians wouldn't. And so Christians began to get called also haters of humanity.

You're so intolerant. You're no fun. They will be mocked. You're narrow-minded. You know, here is, this is one of the earliest graffiti about Christians.

What it is, it's a, instead of Christ on the cross, they placed a donkey there. And it actually says, Alexamonos worships his god.

They would mock Christians for their beliefs. This was the culture that one Peter is set in. And it's not so different from many of our cultures.

[5 : 32] And Peter is writing this letter to say to them, keep swimming against the tide, guys. Keep swimming against the tide. Remember four things.

And here's the four things we're going to look at today. Remember, you're a different people. You have a different hope. You have a different view of trials and suffering. And you have a different joy.

Okay? Are you with me? Good. Well, let's go and look into this passage together. We're different people. He starts off, verse 1 and 2, he says, As elect exiles, to those who are elect exiles, or it could be foreigners or sojourners, is another word.

Peter is using an Old Testament term described for the people of Israel when they were in Egypt and then they wandered in the wilderness after the Exodus. They were a people who were away from home, surrounded by a pagan people.

And he says, Of the dispersion. And the Jews during that time had been, a couple of times had been sent away in exile, scattered around to different countries, different nations.

[6 : 47] And Peter is saying to these groups of Christians, You are like the people of Israel in the past. You are like God's people. You're scattered. You're not at home. You're refugees in this world.

The values of the world conflict with the values of Christ and his kingdom. And you may feel like you're a foreigner here. You know, in England, if you walk into a village pub, it's really interesting.

If you're not from there, it's fascinating because everyone's having conversations. And then you walk into the room and suddenly everyone stops and stares at you.

As if you're like some kind of extinct animal from outer space. Because you're not from there. You speak differently. You think differently. You don't belong. And it's a weird feeling because we desperately want to belong.

Isn't that one of the reasons why if we're Christians, sometimes we struggle to share our faith? Because we want to belong. We don't want to feel like a strange animal in society.

[7 : 50] And Peter is saying, If you're accepted around, that's amazing. But don't be surprised if you're not. If people don't get all your choices to follow Jesus. Because this isn't your home.

You're a foreigner. You're an exile here. You know, some people think that the church should be right at the center of society. You know, and they become very complaining that, you know, society is no longer holding on to Christian values.

And they think everything is going wrong. Well, Peter, actually, he would say, No, in fact, it's normal Christianity when church is on the margins.

Because you're in exile. Here's not your home. Do you know, the last year, the leader of the third biggest political party in the UK had to resign because of his Christian beliefs about things like abortion and sexuality.

And he wasn't allowed to stay as leader. When I was at university, they tried to shut down our Christian group on campus because we refused to say that all religions led to God.

[8 : 57] We were told we were intolerant. And Peter says, Don't be surprised. That's normal Christianity because we're exiles.

We're foreigners. And yet, he says, We're elect exiles. And elect means chosen. Notice he says, By the foreknowledge of the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus.

He's saying, The whole of the Trinity has his eye on you, has chosen you, and being on the margins is not an accident because God has you.

You're his. You may feel like a foreigner around here, but you're not a foreigner to God, the living God who rules over this world. He says, You're secure.

And as a bride is set apart for her husband to please him, even if everyone else looks down and laughs at her, if she sees the delight of her husband, then everything's okay.

[10 : 04] That's what Peter's saying to the church here. If you know you're set apart for God and his delight, you are his treasure, you're for his eyes only, then even though you may feel like you're foreigners, you're secure and you're held by him.

That's the kind of people, a different kind of people that we are. So we're not just a different people. We also have a different hope.

Verse 3, he says, He has caused you, according to his great mercy, he has caused you to be born again to a living hope.

You know when you were born, you became alive in a physical world, right? When you are born again, you become alive in a spiritual world, in a relationship with a living God through trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection.

And he says, Salvation, it's not just about what happened to you in the past, it's also about where God's taking you in the future. And he says, you have a living hope.

[11 : 18] And that could mean a couple of things. It could mean either it's not a dead hope. You know, if England are playing football and you have hope for them, that is a dead hope. But this is a living hope, a hope which doesn't disappoint you.

I know that too well. But it's a hope that doesn't disappoint you. Your future is not uncertain if you trust in Christ. Did you know that? Your future, you may feel it's uncertain, but scripture says it is not uncertain.

It is 100% guaranteed. Because Jesus rose from the dead and you will rise with him if you have trusted in him. It's a living hope.

But it's not just a living hope. It also can be translated a hope of life. Because through the resurrection of Jesus, where he overcame death and sin and sickness and pain, all the things which haunt us in this world, the things which they shared on the video, which we don't like, which we feel are wrong in the world.

Well, he says there's going to be a new creation with a new body and a new earth that God will recreate, which will be teeming with life. That's the hope that he's called us to.

[12 : 37] But he's spelled it out. He says it's a living hope and to an inheritance, okay, an inheritance that is imperishable. It can't perish like to your family and my loved ones can.

It is undefiled. That means it can't spoil like chocolate cake can spoil. And it can't fade like my iPhone battery fades.

You know, in our world, they say, scientists say there's something called entropy, which basically means the world tends towards chaos and decay and disorder. And the way this current world is, it's a bit like when I used to, when I was young, we went on holiday, we used to go to the beach and I would build sandcastles and I'd make amazing sandcastles.

Sandcastles, you could put balls in and run around. It was incredible. And I'd make sure that they were secure from the tide coming in. I'd build a moat around them and things like that.

But then, if you stayed for a few hours, do you know what you'd see? The tide would start coming in and would very slowly just start to wash away the beautiful creation that I had built until eventually there was nothing left.

[14 : 00] You see, that's something that's perishable, can spoil, and can fade. And our culture tells us that through adverts, through all kinds of different things, that we are to place our hope in sandcastles.

They mentioned a couple on the video, planning. I'd never thought of planning as being a hope, but anyway. Great food, a holiday, a new wardrobe, friends, good grades, job opportunities, health, a listening husband, whatever it is that you put your hope in and you desire because you think it's going to make you happy right now.

Peter would say, that's like a sandcastle that's perishable. Because just think about a vacation, you know, some of you come back from vacations and you spent a long time planning your vacation with hope that it was going to be an amazing time and maybe it was an amazing time but you come back and then suddenly what do you want to do?

You want to go on another vacation again. Right? Because does that hope last? Does it fully satisfy? C.S. Lewis once said this, he said, there have been times when I think we do not desire heaven, a living hope, but more often I find myself wondering whether in our heart of hearts we have ever desired anything else.

You see, our greatest desires are sandcastles which are a fading glimpse of a world that is unfading, of an imperishable inheritance that God has for you.

[15 : 43] Now, sandcastles are great. You know, if you could take your kids to the beach, don't tell them, don't build a sandcastle because it's going to get washed away in a few hours. You don't do that. You enjoy it in the moment but you don't put your hope in any of these things which are sandcastles because Peter says you are made for a living hope, one that will not fade, one that will not get washed away.

He says for a salvation that will be revealed in the last time and he says that salvation will be at the revelation, the revealing of Jesus when he comes back again. Do you know, I've just been thinking about this, even this week, the whole of the New Testament, almost every book shouts for us to live in the light of Jesus' return.

You know, in Acts it says when Jesus is taken up and he says the angels come to the disciples and says he's going to come back in the same way that he left. And then you see in Corinthians it says listen, I'm giving you every spiritual gift now while you wait for the revealing of Jesus.

Paul also prays, he says, Maranatha, Lord come back. You know the Lord's prayer, part of it says your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That is ultimately a prayer for God to come back and restore and renew everything. And so as I've been thinking about it, the question that's come to me is when did I last pray for Jesus to return?

[17 : 15] When did you last pray for Jesus to return? When did we actually last think about the fact that there is something more than the little hopes that I live my life for?

Do we spend our time thinking more about a living hope or more about a fading hope in our lives? Because the rest of our culture tells us to chase after fading sandcastles.

and I've just thought why is it that there is this gap in my life and this gap which I think in many of our lives between what first century biblical Christianity is and the way that we live right now in terms of what we're hoping in?

And I, there's many reasons but I thought of a couple of reasons. One reason is I think we swim in a culture that promotes comfort to us.

Do you know like 150 years ago every single one of us would probably have had half of our family members die. You know a quarter of the women would have died in childbirth.

[18 : 28] There was no air con not much medication there were no iPhones and food was your dream. Just getting enough food man that was all you lived for. Life was tough and in many places in the world it still is tough right?

You see that on the news. But now we have this incredible technology which has changed our experience of the world. It's amazing. Our greatest problems are no longer where do I get my food from but which restaurant shall I choose today?

We have air con life expectancy is longer and it's amazing but it deludes us into feeling like we can have heaven on earth right now. You know and this feeling infects even the church.

If you go to Elin bookstore or one of the bookstores you just see how many books there are telling you that you can have your best life now. Just God wants you to have all full prosperity now.

He wants you to have heaven now. You know yesterday lunchtime I was cooking lunch I was trying to put washing in the washer a lot of things on and then the washing machine died.

[19 : 42] And do you know what my first thought was? I can't believe this is happening to me right now. There are so many other things I've got on. Why me? Why right now?

Because I feel entitled for life to work out my way right now. I think that I'm so used to comfort that any discomfort that interrupts the way I think washing should be I just think it's somehow out of order.

But Pluto is telling us that actually maybe I'm more like a spoiled child who hasn't realized that my hope is not in a heavenly kingdom now. It's in a living hope that when Jesus returns he will bring back.

We live in a culture of comfort. I want to give one more reason why we don't often feel we fix our eyes on Jesus' return. Because sometimes it just feels a little bit distant and a little bit intangible.

Does anyone feel like that? You know in verse 8 even Peter admits he says you don't see him now. And you know I know Jesus is coming back in my head but it doesn't feel quite so real.

[20 : 54] It's been a couple of thousand years since he came last time. And you know the sand castles that I live for the hopes that I live for seem so much more immediate. The urgent overtakes the important.

Right? But even in the first century people were thinking the same. You know the next book to Peter people are saying yeah where's Jesus come up?

And Peter says to them listen God's not slow as you think he is slow in coming but he's patient with you. He's not wanting anyone to perish but all to come to repentance.

In other words he's saying now is a season where the gospel is to go out into people's lives. And he will go out until he returns and all the people have come in that he wants to come in.

But you know what? We chase after our illusions like financial security which no matter how much money you have you never have enough. If you're young you believe you're invincible.

[21 : 53] If you're getting older you put on anti-wrinkle cream so you don't see that the tide of death is washing away. Right? Culture tells us these are real but the reality is death and decay will come to every single one of us in this room.

You know you go into the doctor's office and they say it's cancer. And you know the people I meet so often who've lived so long with no regard for God and then they're facing the death of a loved one and they say to me oh God will let them into heaven won't he?

Because right at that moment it's not intangible it's not distant it's very real. But if your hope is only in a sandcastle man when you're facing death everything gets washed away and all you're left with is an empty beach but if Christ is the hope of your heart everything every little comfort that God gives you every blessing you get right now is just a glimpse of that heavenly host that heavenly home that he'll give you that imperishable castle because there's one thing that death cannot take away from you.

One thing that lasts and that's a resurrected savior who has defeated death he has risen again and he's the guarantee if we turn and repent and place our hopes not in his little things of our lives that we're trying to chase after the holidays the work the opportunities but if we trust and hope in him we will experience that living hope.

that's why we pray Maranatha Lord come back we want you because we want you to restore things. We're a different kind of people we have a different kind of hope from the society around us.

[23 : 53] Third thing we have a different view of trials and suffering. You see between the time when we have been born again to this new life and we see that final day when Jesus comes back and restores everything there's this kind of in between period the now and not yet where we have the blessings of life and yet we're waiting for God to change and bring everything new into our lives and he says in Peter he says this in this you rejoice though now for a little while he calls this time a little while if necessary you have been grieved by various trials he says a little while for now for a little while you have trials and you know if some of you are going through trials does it feel like a little while oh they sometimes feel like it's such a long time that you go through trials Paul calls them light and momentary and we don't feel that but actually in the light of eternity they are just minuscule compared to forever that is coming and he says if necessary so that means it's not all the time that there are trials there are periods where we enjoy blessing but he says you've been grieved you know he says there is a reality of the pain some of you right now are experiencing the grief in your families the grief in your in just the circumstances of life you know that pain and he says there are various trials and you know various the word can be translated multi-colored trials there's not just one kind of trial you know it's like amber rain to black rain you know

T1 to T10 okay there's a whole spectrum of trials and what is a trial in Peter's mind he's thinking of the persecution that comes upon Christians living in a pagan world the challenges of holding firm to Christ but he also knows that as God's different people anything which which we have which tests our faith in Christ because he calls that we are set apart for obedience to Jesus anything that tests your faith and your trust in Jesus is a trial are you struggling with health right now that's a trial are you wrestling with your kids that's a trial are you just so frustrated out of your mind because Expedia have failed to set to a refund matter which has been going on for over four months like me that's a trial are you staying single and struggling that's a trial are you trying to find your identity in Jesus but all around you everyone's just performance oriented and you're trying to hold on to him that's a trial why does God give us trials sometimes we think it's God's punishing us but our culture tells us well if God really loves us he'd fix everything right now when God has said right now is not where

I'm fixing everything your exiles your foreigners I will return and I'll fix things but he says why do I give it to you so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire may be found to result in praise glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus what he's saying is whatever trial you're going through right in your life right now one reason God's bringing it is so that you will long for Jesus to return is so that you'll realize that now is not that new creation salvation because he wants to show you that trials are God's gift to you to wake you up from chasing after sandcastles which are going to just fade away so that you'll see that your hope is not placed in just the praise and the glory and honor of people right now but you long for that time when he will be honored and he will be glorified and he will be praised and you will bask in the light of that because you will hear Jesus say to you well done good and faithful servant his praise will be to you before all of the angels

C.S. Lewis said pain insists upon being attended to God whispers to us in our pleasures speaks in our conscience but shouts in our pain it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world have you ever thought about your trials like that that God may be trying to wake you up to long for him and it's not just he's longing bringing to long for him he's also trials are like fire to strengthen your faith and to burn the impurities of our lives away he's trying to strip away the sand castles in your life so that you see that the only thing that is really precious and lasting is Christ because you know even a gold sand castle will get washed away but your faith looking to your savior to be your holy hope he will stand because he rules over everything do you know if you want to increase your muscles do you increase them by sitting on the sofa what do you need you need weights every

Wednesday morning at 7am I joined 30 to 60 people who put their body through suffering of a HIIT workout for the prize of fit healthy bodies that's their sand castle and they're willing to suffer for it but you see if Jesus is our prize and wanting him more than anything else then the trials of life are an opportunity for us to be strengthened in our faith so that we see him and are refined by him so that he becomes more precious than all the other things because everything else can be fading but Jesus will never fade and what that doesn't mean is that if anyone's going through suffering we just go to them hey trials are good suck it up that's not what he's saying it's not the trial in itself but it's what God is doing through the trial that is the beautiful thing you know

[30 : 48] Jesus wants for us to see that there is nothing more precious than himself so many other things blind us to that and what we need to see is that the real deal is coming but today we only get a glimpse in the blessings we see of what he's calling us to you know if you're sick today let me just kind of apply this into sickness if you're sick today I believe God wants to bring healing into your life we want to pray for healing for you you know I heard just last week one of the congregation was telling me last year someone they'd been struggling for gout for a long time and then someone just prayed for them and it just disappeared went gone it's never come back in the last year God has the power to give you a glimpse of the new creation that he's bringing in right now right today in healing and so we want to pray for you today that God would do that in your life but if God heals you today you're still going to die

I'm sorry that's the truth right you're still going to die and so your healing now is a secondary hope it's not an ultimate hope so you hold your healing with open hands saying God I just trust you and you see if he doesn't heal you today then his guarantee is he will heal you maybe tomorrow or maybe when he returns but until then we wait longing for him more than even I want my healing because what he's trying to do is he's trying to change us to be a different kind of people who have a different kind of hope who see that through the trials God is refining and changing us last thing to give us a different joy he says though you have not seen him you love him though you do not see him now you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls our culture tells us do what makes you happy chase after it in whatever number of ways you can in relationships in sex in so many ways and then you look at all the number of depressing songs we have about relationship breakup and you just wonder is that where joy is found but if you want to be truly joyful you've got to look to something or someone outside of this perishable world for true joy that no matter what you're going through nothing can take away

Peter says gospel hope changes today because in the midst of your trials it can bring you a deep love and joy in Jesus and many of us if you've been through trials you know it has brought you so much closer to Jesus and by joy he doesn't mean just feeling happy because that kind of comes and goes because some of you know the real sense of grief there is but he means a deep seated confident peace regardless of what turmoil or blessings you're going through right now do you have that do you have that confidence right now in him because that joy comes from tasting the goodness and mercy of Jesus verse 3 to 12 says in fact verse 3 to 12 are all one sentence about hope and suffering but they're a song of praise because he says blessed be the God of father of our

Lord Jesus Christ according to his mercy he has caused you if you're a believer to be born again and you know Peter knows all about this mercy of God because you know he was grieved by his own sin his trial before before the girl and when he denies Jesus he failed the trial God gave him where his faith was tested and in bitterness he repents before he repents of what he's done and when Jesus rose again and they were having and Jesus appears to them by the lake do you know what do you know who the first person who wants to run and meet you Jesus is it's Peter because Peter knows the forgiveness and mercy of Jesus if you know and let me just just want to close with this I used to have a really sweet tooth after being in Hong

Kong I stopped eating sweet things so much and my taste buds have changed if I eat sweet things I no longer they're too sweet for me when I heard John Piper talking about the return of Jesus and he once said sinlessness I can I can almost taste it and I went wow that's a man who's had a diet so filled of the gospel of Jesus that his taste buds have been changed to be like him to want and desire him and to want to live fully honoring to him in his life and my taste buds are filled with that holiday I can almost taste it financial security I can almost taste it comfortable life I can almost taste it because the diet of our thoughts are so focused on me and on getting comfort on getting just the things that I want anyone like me

[37 : 00] I think as a church Peter is calling us he wants us to get a taste of Jesus and how precious he is and even if you're going through the trials he wants you to see that tasting Jesus is better than anything else you want to taste that's why we read scripture that's why we sing that's why we repent that's why we have CGs to encourage each other because it's all for our joy right now have you ever thought that the trials God may be bringing to you right now are God's mercy to you to show you that he is more precious than anything else that may be fading anything else that you may be chasing after right now let's pray I want you just to stop and think about what is it in your life right now that you you're actually putting your hope in what are your taste buds filled with what are your thoughts filled with what are your plans filled with how much you filled with the beauty of a savior who even though we live in a broken world where we chase after our own comforts and the things of this life and we neglect so many other people and so many other things and yet God comes to us and says

I want to bring you my mercy I want to bring you my forgiveness I want to show you mercy right now that it's mercy that you have a hope that at the end of your life you will have something worth living for if you trust in Jesus that there will be something that lasts if you trust in Jesus and it's only the mercy of God that brings it Father we just pray that as a church you'd help us not to make here our home let us enjoy the good things you give us but only as a glimpse that when our washing machines break when we face sickness and trials when we struggle that you are giving us mercy to want us to fix our eyes on you and to place our hope in you strengthen our faith open our eyes to see how beautiful you are in Jesus name

Amen Jesus and can earn who can help her Christ Lord look at some feet in the Defense of the table how life do Gina behold can hug what afternoon