

## **This Exiled Life – part 1**

### An Exile Mindset

1 Peter 1:6-9

Mark Vroegop

---

*<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, <sup>11</sup> inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, 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 (1 Peter 1:10–13).*

I'd like to introduce you to one of our church members at College Park North Indy. Alan is one of our brave firefighters with the Indianapolis Fire Department, and he has been helping me think through applications for 1 Peter over the last few months. He and his wife joined College Park about two years ago. They lead a small group, participate in our ministry to international students at IUPUI, and are praying about moving somewhere in the Middle East to make disciples in the labor camps of the Arabian Peninsula.

While Alan and I share a common love for Jesus, we are very different when it comes to fire. My tendency is to get away from burning houses, whereas Alan's tendency is to run into burning houses. I try to avoid fires. But it is Alan's job and calling to be in situations that are not safe when it comes to fire. Now I'm sure that you would agree that my tendency is far more natural and normal. Alan's role as a firefighter involves doing things that are counter-intuitive, but this hasn't happened by accident.

As a firefighter, training was all that Alan did for the first half of his first year and then regularly every year for his entire career. Alan and his crew have extensive training; they practice often, and they study the latest firefighting techniques because they have to be clear-headed in intense scenarios.

Alan and I were talking about the importance of this when he told me about how he learned this lesson the hard way. Early in his career there was a house fire, and Alan's truck was first on the scene. After he quickly hooked up the first hose, he rushed inside the home ahead of the rest of the crew. Once inside, it was clear that the fire was in the attic, and the lieutenant called for an attic ladder, a narrow ladder used to access the attic between ceiling joists. However, Alan jumped on a table and began punching through the ceiling, creating a hole, and he started pulling himself and his gear through. Once in the attic, and exhausted already, he pulled the hose up, only to hear his air pack alarm go off because he had used up so much oxygen in punching the hole and getting into the attic. Now he was in trouble because the space was confined, the fire was near, and he was running out of oxygen. His only option was to crawl out a hole in the roof that other members of his crew had made. While the rest of his team extinguished the fire, Alan lay on the roof gasping for breath.

In reflecting on that experience, Alan said this:

*When I was young I don't even remember thinking about training; it was just what I had to do to prove I could be a fireman. I just did everything as fast as I could and was, in a way, competing with others and myself. I don't remember ever trying to understand why we did things a certain way or what best practices were. I just did what they told me to as fast as I could. Now, I listen and train with the thought in mind that I never want to be in a dangerous situation without knowing the best way to go about it.*

For a firefighter, the right training and the right mind-set could be a matter of life and death. The intensity of the job requires a commitment to a particular way of thinking. The survival of a firefighter depends on thinking correctly and clearly in the middle of very challenging situations.

### **Thinking as an Exile**

Today we are back in the first chapter of 1 Peter, and the aim of this first section is to get an introductory perspective on what it means to be a Christian exile. In 1 Peter 1:10-13, here is what we find: **A shift in culture requires intentional biblical thinking.** In other words, when life gets hard, you better be intentional about your thinking. I've said before that that the problem with our thinking is that we don't think about our thinking. Well, that problem becomes even worse when there is a negative or challenging intensification of the pressure.

If you have not joined us before, Peter is using this exile concept as a category for living when it seems that the world's values are quickly turning against Christianity. He was writing to people in the first century who had become Christians, and who then began to discover that their beliefs and their way of following Jesus was not being widely accepted. In fact, it was being increasingly opposed. They may have been experiencing it in their families, in their communities, and in their jobs.

The culture was clearly starting to shift. And with that came an intensification that required some additional thought and instruction. Peter writes to these believers in order to help them navigate these difficult days. Our text today starts to transition us from spiritual realities into how to live. It opens the door on what exiles are to do as they come to terms with the challenges that they are facing.

One of the many reasons that I wanted to study 1 Peter is because I am more and more convinced that bad thinking and weak theology are going to be increasingly more evident and dangerous as the culture shifts and becomes more hostile to Christianity.

Throughout this book, Peter aims to demonstrate how living as an exile requires a particular way of thinking that results in a way of living. Exiles connect truth to life. They live through and by particular truths.

Let's see two ways that this text informs what an exile mindset looks like:

#### **1. Consider God's Prior Grace**

As is so common in the Scriptures, Peter starts by anchoring everything to the beauty of God's grace. In other words, before he starts to give some very important instruction about what these people are to

think or do, he highlights and elevates the amazing nature of God's work in their lives. Successful exile living involves a careful consideration and celebration of God's prior grace.

Now this happens by virtue of a number of key phrases that spring out of the text, all of which are designed not just to be understood intellectually; verses 10-12 are meant to remind you how amazing God's grace has been to you personally.

**Consider salvation** – Verse 10 starts here by linking what is going to be said with what we have previously studied in verses 1-9. The previous verse highlighted a few important things about salvation:

- vv. 1-2: God is working out a plan for redemption and a plan for their lives. Their (our) exile is connected to a bigger divine plan.
- vv 3-5: All of the spiritual and eternal blessings of God's redemption are kept safe by God both now and in the future, so no matter what happens, "we're good."
- vv 6-9: It is possible to not only survive as an exile, but to thrive. Believers can rejoice in difficult days

Peter began his letter here because this spiritual foundation sets the context for what is really going on and what is really valuable. The genuineness of faith is, after all, more precious than gold (v. 7).

**Consider the history of revelation** - The next aspect of God's prior grace is to appreciate the history of God's revelation through the Old Testament prophets. In verse 10 Peter reminds his readers that prior to this moment in biblical history, the prophets had been searching very carefully to try to understand the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

Notice that 1) these prophets searched and inquired carefully and 2) they did so by the power of the Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit. Their aim was to discover "the grace that was to be yours." In other words, these prophets were supernaturally and intentionally searching for the moment or situation in which God's redemption would come, and Peter reminds his readers (and us) that you have it. The grace is now yours!

Peter wants to encourage and exhort hurting believers about how special and privileged they are to be living in this moment. The prophets were looking for this day. They were longing for this day to come. And these exiles should not forget that they are "living the dream."

Do you ever find yourself complaining about something only to be reminded that years ago you dreamed of the kind of life you'd be living right now? A few years ago I was sort of complaining about how busy basketball season was, traveling from game to game. You know the drill. And the person I was talking with said something like: "A few years from now, when the house is so quiet, you'll miss all those games." And I was rebuked in my heart. I had dreamed of having kids and going to games and cheering them on. Ironically and tragically, now that I had kids, the stress or the pressure of life meant that I was forgetting that this is what I had dreamed about. I'm living the dream. I needed to change my attitude and remember how thankful I should be.

In a much more important context, Peter is trying to do that here. These exiles are living on the other side of God's historical plan. The Old Testament prophets longed and ached for this day. They wanted to know about this grace, and the recipients of 1 Peter were those who possessed this grace!

**Consider the work of Jesus** – As these exiles look back at God's prior grace, they have a clearer and more personal vision for what God's grace actually looks like. Verse 10b talks about "the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories." I think Peter mentions this for two reasons.

First, the work of God's grace in their lives is not merely a theological or spiritual reality. Rather, it is connected to the flesh-and-blood Son of God named Jesus. He lived in their world, and He felt what they felt. He was an exile like them but even more so. He came to His own and His own people did not receive Him (John 1:11). So, there is a Savior who understands the challenges of this exiled life.

Second, the model of suffering leading to glory, as evidence in Jesus' life, becomes the basis of hope for those who are facing difficulties and persecution even now. Peter uses the life of Jesus and the suffering-leads-to-glory argument as a central part of his motivation in enduring suffering:

*<sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:21 (ESV)*

Mark it down somewhere in your mind: Being an exile means following Jesus. More than just believing a series of theological truths or ascribing to a particular worldview, you have to know Jesus. Consider the work of Jesus, His suffering, and the subsequent glories, because that's the plan for you!

**Consider the beauty of what happened to you** – In verse 12 the focus becomes even more personal with the aim of having these believers (and us) take a step back and consider the unbelievable grace that comes to a personal when they put their faith in Jesus.

First, Peter wants them to know that the prophets were looking forward to the kind of day that they are now experiencing. The prophets were searching and looking for what you have now received.

Second, the dawning of that moment in history came to each of them personally through the preaching of the gospel which was empowered by the Holy Spirit. As they thought back on when they understood and received the grace of God, Peter wants them to know that what happened to them was something amazing and supernatural. It was by the Spirit-anointed preaching of the gospel that the grace of God came to them. They were not just receiving a message, a sermon, or someone's story; they were encountering the supernatural work of God's spirit in their life. That moment was something incredibly special at a historical, spiritual, and personal level.

Third, Peter highlights the beauty of this by appealing to the curiosity and amazement of angels as they consider God's work of grace in saving human beings. This is to say that God's grace is so unbelievable that it attracts the interest of creatures in another realm. If God's plan for redemption is blowing the minds of angels, shouldn't it have the same effect on you?

In verses 10-12, Peter wants to help exiles remember the amazing grace of God in their lives. He wants them to stop and consider the beauty of what God has done for them so that they do not lose a very

important context. The intensity of being an exile can easily make you a self-centered, complaining, easily discouraged, and unspiritual person. You can quickly forget or just not appreciate the beautiful reality of what God has done for you. God's grace can be so familiar that you lose the "awe."

While I was in Holland, Michigan two weeks ago, I had lunch with two of my former pastors at a restaurant that overlooked Macatawa Bay. The sun was shining, the seagulls were flying, a light breeze was coming off the water, and I said to Luke Humphrey, who was traveling with me, "You know, I totally took this for granted when I lived here. I didn't realize how beautiful this was until I moved to Indy."

Does that sound like something similar to what is happening in your soul? Have the circumstances, the pressures, and the fears of an exiled life started to rob you of the joy and amazement of God's grace? Have you started to take for granted the amazing nature of how God saved you? Have you taken your eyes off the "suffering-leads-to-glory" model of following Jesus? Have difficult circumstances started to surface self-centered, earthly-minded thoughts and attitudes? Have you forgotten what God has done for you? Do you need to repent, even now, of a heart that is no longer marveling at what God has done for you?

At a pastor's retreat in June, Pastor Dale Shaw gave our pastors a great challenge about experiencing the peace of Christ. We were on a boat together as he shared, so it felt a little bit like Jesus was talking to us! He challenged us to spend time thanking God more frequently and more specifically about the fruit that we do see versus spending time focusing on the fruit that we don't see. It was a life-giving talk. So when I'm weary, and when Sarah and I are discouraged, we try to thank God for all the grace that we have received but that we have taken for granted. And I'm telling you, it helps our endurance!

Part of having an exile mind-set is an intentional consideration and rehearsing of God's grace in our lives. But there is something else that we must do.

## **2. Set Your Hope on Future Grace**

I hope that you take note of the word "therefore" in verse 13 because it is really important. What follows in this next section of 1 Peter, beginning here and continuing through verse 21, are three imperatives (you might want to underline them):

- v 13 – "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you"
- v 15 – "be holy in all your conduct"
- v 17 – "conduct yourselves with fear"

We are focusing on the first imperative this week, and we'll look at the second one (v 15) next week. All of them relate to the implications or applications of a proper understanding of God's grace and a right evaluation of the cultural pressure.

There two questions that we need to answer here:

**What does it mean to set your hope on future grace?**

In short, Peter is commanding these believers who are experiencing the effects of exile to set their full hope on the promise of God's grace to them in the future. Setting your hope in God's future grace means to read the promises in the Bible, especially about the future, and to point your heart and your hope toward those promises as a means of strength, belief, and faith.

Throughout the Bible, thinking correctly and considering or weighing the negative effects or consequences in comparison to the value of God's kingdom is a vital part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus and how to endure. In other words, you will not endure well if you don't know how to "set your hope" or "consider" things correctly. A few examples:

- What you hope for spiritually is tied to faith: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1, ESV)
- Setting your hope correctly motivates ministry: *For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.* (1 Timothy 4:10, ESV)
- One of the dangers of wealth is that you can set your hope in it: <sup>17</sup> *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* (1 Timothy 6:17, ESV)

Setting your hope on something becomes a great motivator for living. The promise of something or the vision of something in the future becomes the means by which challenges are presently endured. In athletics, no one trains just to train; there is a promise of something (e.g., winning the game, finishing in the top 10, losing weight, staying healthy). In academics, no one studies just to study; there is the promise of good grades, a top-notch job, or being viewed as the expert. You get the point. The promise of something in the future serves as a powerful motivator for living right now.

In other places in the Bible, the word "consider" is used for this kind of evaluation of what is really valuable and what should be hoped for. A few examples:

- *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."* (Romans 8:18, ESV)
- *"... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."* (Hebrews 12:1–3, ESV)
- *"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:12–14, ESV)

You see, this idea of "considering" or "setting your hope" on what is to come is not something that happens passively or naturally. That's why I think Peter says "fully" in verse 13. There is a battle for hope in the heart of every Christian. Coming to faith in Christ means that you set your hope on Christ's work, not

yours. But it also means that you keep setting your hope on Him. I fix my hope on what the Bible says to be true, and I train my heart to believe the promises in the future so that I live by them even now.

Exile living involves a mind that considers the past grace of God with joy and sets our affections on the future grace of God with hope. One of my favorite verses that illustrates this is 1 Peter 2:23, which serves as model for how we are to suffer:

*"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."* (1 Peter 2:23, ESV)

How does one not revile when reviled? How does one not threaten when suffering? By setting one's hope in a future judgment, knowing that God is the one who will judge it all justly. You release defensiveness, bitterness, and vengeance by setting your hope on something greater! You set your hope on God's future grace.

Setting our hope of God's future grace means that we consider the promises of God as so true and compelling that they affect how we live right now. It means that I hear the promise of God. I consider God's promise in comparison to the promise offered to me by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and I set my hope on God's promise.

That leads to yet another question.

### **How do you practically set your hope on future grace?**

Verse 13 has two participial phrases that are linked to this concept, and they inform how one sets his or her hope on that future grace. These participles are the means by which the setting of hope happens.

The first phrase is "preparing your mind for action." The text literally reads "gird up the loins of your mind," and it was used for the way that someone would tuck in the long flowing garments of his clothing in order to run or do serious work.<sup>1</sup> Paul uses this imagery in Ephesians 6:14 when he says, "having fastened the belt of truth."

The point here in 1 Peter is that there is a mental readiness connected with what you do with your mind. The emphasis here is upon disciplined, careful thinking. The idea is that you read, think, and study something so that when you are confronted with something that is wrong or you are tempted to set your hope on the wrong thing, you will see it for what it is.

What are some things that contribute to having a disciplined mind? First, be careful about when you let your mind set in neutral. By definition, amusement means to divert attention, and while there is nothing sinful about amusement *per se*, your life can be inundated with it, and it can take over. A person who passively allows the Internet, movies, television, and social media to fill his mind will not have a disciplined mind.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 78.

Second, be sure that you are filling your mind with biblical truth. Scripture reading, memorization, reading good books, taking one of our equipping classes, and joining a Bible study are all examples of things you could do to gird up the loins of your mind

Third, put into action what you are learning by talking about it in a Small Group, discipling someone, or serving in some capacity. The truth sinks deeper into your soul when you have to apply it, discuss it, or teach it.

Make your mind a priority because without thinking the right thoughts, you'll never hope in the right promises.

The other participle here is "being sober-minded." Peter uses this word in 1 Peter 4:7 in regard to prayer and in 5:7 in regard to the attacks of the devil. The idea is simply that we are spiritually alert, awake, and ready. In basketball, it looks like the triple threat position – ready to shoot, pass, or dribble. Spiritually it means that we resist the tendency to coast and to become lazy. Some of you are in a dangerous position today because you are spiritually drowsy. I hope you hear the calling today to "wake up!"

And there are others of you that are intoxicated with other pleasures. 1 John 2:15-17 warns us about loving the things in the world. It can be anything that is a part of the created order. Let me test it this way: In the last hour, what are the things that you've been thinking about along with trying to listen to this sermon? How you look, how someone else looks, your emails, your social media status, your finances, your vacation plans, your boyfriend or girlfriend? What is it that takes up space in your mind, and dulls your affections for Christ?

Sober-mindedness does not happen by accident. It takes an intentional orientation of the mind and the heart so that your hope is set on the right thing. Your affections will follow your thoughts.

This text is designed to help Christian exiles navigate their culture. And the more intense the cultural shift, the more important an exile mindset becomes. We need intentional biblical thinking that looks back to God's grace with joy and looks to God's grace in the future with hope. An exile mindset means that you make your mind a priority because without thinking the right thoughts, you'll never hope in the right promises.

© College Park Church

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce this material in any format provided that you do not alter the content in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Mark Vroegop. © College Park Church - Indianapolis, Indiana. [www.yourchurch.com](http://www.yourchurch.com)