

# The Distinctive Life of Exile

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Thanks very much, Jill. And yeah, please do keep your Bibles open at that passage in 1 Peter as we look through those verses together. I've lived in Scotland nearly 20 years now.

When I speak to my parents, who are still in England and still very English, there are two things that convince them, you might be surprised to hear this, of how Scottish I've become.

Firstly, that I sometimes say we instead of small. I've picked up that. And secondly, they say that I'll say I'll take a cup of tea, please, rather than I'll have a cup of tea, please.

I'm not convinced that actually is a Scottish thing, but my parents are. And on those two pieces of information, they've concluded, basically, I've gone entirely native, that I must just blend in seamlessly anywhere north of the border.

I'm less convinced in my experience that that's the case. But that idea of blending in, of learning kind of not to stick out, is a big idea that comes up in this letter 1 Peter.

[ 1 : 0 8 ] Obviously, there's no problem with someone's accent or mannerisms changing a little bit if they move elsewhere. But Peter says that it is a problem.

It is a serious issue if, as Christians, if, as the church, we just learn to blend in with the world around us.

Peter wants to make sure that we don't go native, as it were, but remain distinctive as God's people. This is our third week in 1 Peter. I hope we're starting to get to grips with this letter a little bit.

A quick recap again. We've seen this concept of being elect exiles that runs right through this book introduced in the very first verse. We saw, particularly last week, how we are exiles here on earth because we have this heavenly inheritance.

We have a heavenly home being kept for us. That's where we're truly at home. And this week, as we'd expect, in a letter, Peter builds on what he's already said.

[ 2 : 1 2 ] But really, the main new emphasis that we're going to see this week is the idea of how we live out this identity of elect exiles. The word for conduct is repeated three times at the very heart of this section.

How we're to conduct ourselves, the way we're to live, how we're to keep living as exiles and avoid that danger of just blending in, of being molded by our surroundings, of just going with the flow.

That's Peter's focus this morning. That's going to be our focus this morning. So here's what we're going to see. Here's a kind of summary statement, and then we'll dig into this in a bit more detail. But we're to diligently focus on Jesus' return in order to live holy lives as children of God, knowing we were ransomed by Jesus' blood.

Diligently focus on Jesus' return in order to live holy lives as children of God. That's that main kind of conduct section there, knowing we were ransomed by Jesus' blood.

And notice straight away there that that middle conduct section, how we're to live as God's children, as exiles, is surrounded by the work of Jesus, his future return, his past sacrifice that enables us to live holy lives in the present.

[ 3 : 36 ] So let's get stuck in. First part of that statement, diligently focus on Jesus' return. Really, this is verse 13. Verse 13, it says this, 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.

As always, that therefore links us to what Peter has already said. We spoke last week about our true home being that heavenly inheritance that God is keeping for us and God is keeping us for, that actually we're exiles in the present because of the fact of that eternal home, that better home.

Well, those are the facts. But Peter wants us to know here that we actually have to go a level deeper than simply knowing the facts. We have to commit to setting our hope fully on those facts.

I know it is better for my health to have a salad rather than a Big Mac. For that knowledge to make any difference, I have to act on that fact. I have to commit to it, however challenging that might be.

And just listen to the language then that Peter uses in verse 13. It says, Preparing your minds for action. If you have a look in your Bibles there, you'll probably have a little footnote.

[ 5 : 02 ] The literal language is girding up the loins of your mind. He used to have a lecturer, a guy called Edward Lobb. Some of you might know, he was a sort of fairly posh English chap like myself.

He used to say at the beginning of a lesson, he'd say, Right, chaps, let's gird our loins. I've never heard anyone else use that phrase, but it was his way of saying, Right, guys, let's focus.

This is going to take a little bit of effort and work. Girding the loins of your mind. Peter goes on, I'm being sober minded. The idea there is thinking clearly, thinking accurately.

Why is drinking and driving so dangerous? Because when people aren't sober, their concentration, their reactions are lacking. Peter says, We need to be spiritually sober, with a clarity of thought, and then set your hope fully.

Again, this is active language. Set your hope. Don't just see where it ends up. Really direct it. Set your hope fully. Not a half-hearted thing, but a whole focus.

[ 6 : 07 ] And where is this all pointed? Where is this all to be directed to? On the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And again, that big theme in Peter of what is still to come. We saw it last week, verse 7, the praise and glory and honor, incredibly, that we, that God's people, receive at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That phrase again. Here it is, at the grace that will be brought to us, at the revelation of Jesus Christ. What is to come, and we need to make sure that we never forget this, that what is to come, what is promised for Christians, is so good.

A perfect heavenly inheritance better than anything else. And that is where we need to keep our focus. But, but Peter's point here, in the language that he's using, this language of kind of effort and hard work, as we've seen, is that it requires diligence to keep our hope fully set on that grace that will be revealed when Jesus returns.

Because of our, our fallenness, because of the sin in our lives, because of our fallen world, and the pressures it puts on us to kind of conform into its mold, we are constantly being tempted to put our hope elsewhere.

[ 7 : 32 ] The grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, the praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ, the inheritance kept in heaven for us that we will receive at that time, we could imagine it is like the top of a pyramid.

It is higher, it is greater than any other point. But keeping our focus there, keeping our hope there, is like trying to keep a ball at the top of that pyramid.

It's constantly wanting to fall down, to lower things. Unless, unless we put in that effort that Peter here is talking about. We spoke a bit last week about, you know, what are those, those lower hopes, whether they are our physical health, whether they are a comfortable life in terms of wealth and ease, or whether it's popularity, putting our hope in what other people think about us or say about us.

Whether it's having every opportunity for ourselves or our kids being able to do all the things that we or they would want to do. These are things that all kind of attract us, coax us in.

And that the world says, strive after these things, prioritize these things, that's what it's all about, hope in them. And yet remember, they're not eternal. They are not imperishable.

[ 8 : 51 ] They are not guaranteed. That the kitchen extension or earning a place in that kind of inner circle at work or at school, those things pale into insignificance compared to the glory and the grace that God promises on Jesus' return.

Compared to that verdict of well done, good and faithful servant that God gives his people as they reach their eternal inheritance. And so the facts are a no-brainer.

What God promises is better, it's more glorious, it's more secure, it's more eternal. But the reality is it takes diligence on our part to set and keep our hope there.

And so what does this diligence look like then? How can we do it? I think part of it and part of what Peter wants us to recognize here is simply an awareness. An awareness that actually keeping focused on Jesus' return in a world that looks very different is not our kind of default state.

Even without being specific about what this might involve, it has to be something, doesn't it? Preparing our minds, being sober-minded, setting our hope fully. These are not passive things.

[ 10 : 06 ] The first step, I think, is an awareness of this, that it has to have some input on our part to keep focused on Jesus. So let me just give you then one example of what that might look like.

This is certainly not a hard and fast rule, but again, this is something rather than nothing, something that I've found helpful, and you might find it helpful, you might think of other things along similar lines, but this is from a book by a guy called Justin Earley.

It's a book subtitled Habits of Purpose in an Age of Distraction. Someone bought it for me because I'm quite easily distracted. One of his habits, it's a Christian book, one of his habits, he says, scripture before phone in the day is one of his habits.

He speaks about how we wake up, and we check our phone. It's our kind of default thing, even if that's just to see what time it is, even if that's to turn an alarm clock off. He says, straight away, we are exposed to so much of the world shaping us.

Earley kind of talks about it in three different areas. He speaks about emails reminding us of jobs we need to do in order to please other people. Social media that invites us straight away to be comparing our lives to the lives of those around us.

[ 11 : 20 ] The news that causes us to put our hope in some political cause or result, or maybe causes us to lose hope in the world entirely with some of the stuff that's going on.

Straight away then, we open our eyes in the morning and the world is shaping us. All of those things are dragging down that hope from the return of Jesus to the worldly, to the insecure, and to the non-eternal.

Earley says instead, Bible before phone, beginning the day, lifting our eyes to see that which is of eternal significance. Again, that's just an idea.

That's not a hard and fast rule, although perhaps there is a lot of wisdom there. That means effort. It might mean getting up a bit earlier. It might mean breaking a habit. It might mean buying an alarm clock that's not your phone.

But it is taking seriously that need to diligently focus on Jesus' return and the grace that will be brought to us because that is where our ultimate hope lies and it is worth putting in that effort because that hope is better than anything that the world can offer.

[ 12 : 32 ] So that's the first section of our theme this morning, diligently focus on Jesus' return. But that has an aim, a goal, as we've said in the present, which is this, in order to live holy lives as children of God.

And that's the second major focus of this passage, live holy lives as children of God. This is really the kind of heart of the passage here. This is where that focus on conduct, how we conduct ourselves that we mentioned earlier comes into view.

For those who are God's children, and there's a repeated emphasis in these verses on being children with God as our Father, for those who, through God's mercy, have been brought into his family and therefore share in that heavenly inheritance.

Peter says, children of God should be distinctive in how we live as we live holy lives for him. Verse 14, it says, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

I think there's really kind of two distinctions in there, aren't there? Firstly, that if and when we become a Christian, we should expect to live differently from how we did before.

[ 13 : 48 ] It's not that we become a Christian and we suddenly become perfect, that all of our previous struggles just disappear. That's absolutely not true. But it is true to say, and Peter's making the point, that we have changed category here, that we are now children of God through his mercy.

Whereas at once we were very much at home in the world, chasing after the hopes and dreams of the world, that actually now we're exiles, setting our hope fully on Jesus' return.

Peter says, let that new identity, children of God, not your old identity, be what shapes and forms you. So there's this contrast with how we are from how we used to be.

There's also a second distinction as well, which is a contrast from how the world around us lives. Because we live in a world that still are in that, full of people who still are in that former ignorance.

And let me explain that word, ignorance. It's really important to say that's not saying that people in the world are stupid. That's not at all saying that if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian that somehow we don't really respect you.

[ 15 : 00 ] 100% not. It's not saying that the Christians are super insightful or intelligent people who've worked things out. That's the opposite, isn't it? Of this idea of being elect that we've spoken about and the humility that it brings.

And all it means is we simply live in a world full of people who don't know God. We live in a world full of people with no relationship with God, who aren't living for God, whose passions, to use the language of this verse, are not directed toward God.

And that way of life is being played out all around us. That is the water in which we swim and it seeks to conform us. It's like kind of Play-Doh in a mold, the world trying to squeeze us into that.

And so we're to be distinct from our past and distinct from our surroundings and instead are to live holy lives as children of God. Verse 15 and 16, But as he who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. I know it's probably fair to say that holy is not in some ways a particularly popular word.

[ 16 : 20 ] Even if we're Christians, we don't often kind of compliment people, do we, on their holiness. Or if we have children, we might say, you know, we'd like them to be kind, we want them to be more loving, we want them to trust in Jesus, and all of those things are completely right.

We don't often hear people saying, I really want my children to be holy. Or as a Christian, I'm really striving to be holy. Often I think to us that conveys the idea of just being a little bit over the top, doesn't it?

It's a bit too keen, a bit too much, taking ourselves or our faith a bit too seriously. We say, you know, they're a bit holier than thou. It's just a bit much. And yet the Bible's really clear, isn't it, here and elsewhere, throughout.

The Bible is really clear. Be holy. Be holy in all your conduct, Peter says. No exceptions. We need not to approach that word as almost a negative thing, to be ashamed of, but instead as the defining characteristic of Christian conduct.

And that all of us together would be openly striving after holiness, that we'd be spurring one another on in holiness. And we can do that because holy does not mean I'm better than other people.

[ 17 : 36 ] And holy does not mean God loves me because I'm so good. Now remember this section on holy conduct is surrounded by the work of Jesus. His future return, His past sacrifice.

Holiness is in response to that. Holiness is a humble thing, not an arrogance. But again, just like keeping our focus on Jesus' return, it is something that we need to be diligent about.

God says, be holy because I am holy. Because of Jesus, we are God's children and we are called to live out that family resemblance we focus on Jesus' return in order to live holy lives in the present.

Because it's Jesus' return that we'll be truly home. That we'll see our heavenly Father face to face. And so, we live out that family pattern here and now as we look ahead to that in the future.

So what does it actually mean then to be holy? Probably it's something that takes more than the two minutes we've got available to speak about that. But if our holiness is modeled on God's character, be holy for I am holy, God says.

[ 18 : 49 ] It means, at the very least, it must be that complete rejection of sin. All of us have repeated patterns of sin and temptation in our lives, don't we?

Maybe more or less obvious, maybe more or less public. Maybe it is pride and always trying to put other people down. Maybe it is lust and pornography, things we look at when nobody's watching.

Maybe it is coveting other people's situations or families or possessions or homes. There's not a single person in this room who doesn't undergo these temptations or others like them that aren't drawn back to old habits, that aren't tempted into the way of the world around us.

And yet, holiness recognizes that because we've been born again to a living hope, chapter 1, verse 3, born again into God's family as his obedient children, that we have the choice each and every time to say no to those things.

That those sins are now the things that are unnatural to who we truly are as God's children. So that's the negative side of holiness, turning away from sin.

[ 20 : 07 ] The positive side really is that it just means looking toward God. It means looking forward to that perfect inheritance, that eternal home, and living in light of that. Living out that identity of obedient children here and now, being holy because we look to God, look to God as our Father and He is holy.

Be holy because I am holy, God says. Also it says, remember, God our Father is the judge, verse 17. We live this time of exile conducting ourselves with fear. That doesn't mean being scared of God, but it means recognizing His greatness, His worth, His holiness, and that one day we will stand before Him.

And on that day we will be welcomed as His children through the work of Jesus. And we want to be able to stand there as those who as His children have strived after holiness, that haven't just been spending our time blending in with the world around us, not really changing from how we used to be, but day by day have been turning away from sin toward God who has saved us, living holy lives as God our Father is holy.

So diligently focus on Jesus' return in order to live holy lives as children of God. And lastly, final section, knowing we were ransomed by Jesus' blood.

This is verse 18 to the end, but we'll just be brief here. Really, Peter's logic here is to say, remember, your Father is the judge. Remember, you're going to stand before God, so be holy, but also remember that you'll be able to stand there with perfect security because it's not that holiness, it's not your holiness that is going to save you, but it's the fact that you have been bought at the greatest price through the work of Jesus.

[ 22 : 00 ] Verse 18, 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, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

I can perhaps think about this this way. Imagine it's time for you to get a new car, and the old one has given up the ghost, and you think, okay, this time I'm not getting a Ford or a Citroen or whatever I've had before.

This time I've got a kind of a hankering for a Lamborghini, and so you head to the Lamborghini garage, you pay an extortionate amount of money, you remortgage the house, you clear out the bank account, and then some, and you purchase this car.

The question then, getting into our minds, how would you look after that car? If you're anything like me, you would be incredibly careful with that. You'd be avoiding all the potholes, no one's getting in the back with their dirty wellies on, I don't think they even have a back.

Anyway, you're going to park it at the far corner of the Tesco car park because you don't want anyone to open their door into the side of your supercar. The cost that we pay for something shapes or reveals how much we value it, and so how much we care for it.

[ 23 : 18 ] What Peter's saying to us here is that we have been purchased, we have been ransomed by God at the greatest possible cost, far more than silver or gold, Peter says.

The precious blood of Christ, the perfect sacrifice. That is how much God values us. Peter makes the contrast that this is permanent rather than perishable like gold or silver.

This is not a lease, this is payment is good for all eternity because of the perfection of Jesus and his sacrifice in our place. Really, the whole Bible, and this passage is a great example of it, the whole Bible contains what we sometimes call indicatives and imperatives, things which are true, the indicatives, and things which are commands, the imperatives.

We've seen in this passage in some ways one of the key commands for God's people, be holy in all your conduct. You shall be holy for I am holy, God says.

We want this morning to feel the weight of that command. As individuals and as a church, it is important how we live as God's people, turning away from sin, turning to God, living distinctive lives in the world in which we're placed.

[ 24 : 38 ] But the commands of what we are to do are always based on the truths of what God has done. The conduct section, again in the middle, surrounded by the work of Jesus at the beginning and end.

all that we have spoken about is possible because we know that we have been ransomed by Christ. How can we be holy and make a break with our past, those sins we were speaking about that have such a hold on us?

How can we cut them loose? It's only by knowing that we have been brought by Christ and we now belong to him, that sin no longer is our master, but we are owned by God.

How can we live fearing God in the right way, knowing that one day we'll stand before him as the judge? It's because we know that we will stand before him confident because of the blood of Jesus that has redeemed us and brought us back.

How can we keep on hoping in God, even when that's tough, even when no one else around us seems to be doing that, even when we might get a hard time from the world for doing that? Well, it's because verse 21, our final verse, it's because God raised him, that's Jesus from the dead, and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

[ 26 : 04 ] God has done that for Jesus, the suffering of death but the glory of new life and eternal life in God's presence. And so hope and faith can securely be in him, that he will do the same for us, that we follow in Jesus' footsteps, we follow through his work in our place, knowing that God will bring us through suffering for our faith, into that eternal glory and eternal life.

Diligently focus on the return of Jesus, let's keep our hope fully on Jesus' return and our eternal home in order to live holy lives as children of God, turning away from sin and seeking God's will above all else, knowing we are ransomed by Jesus' blood, that our hope is not in our efforts or our work, but in Jesus and his perfect and precious sacrifice.

In him, our eternal life with God is secure, so that we are able, as his children, not just to blend in with a world who doesn't yet know him, but to live distinctively as his children now, knowing we will be with him for all eternity when Jesus returns.

And so we keep our eyes fixed, we diligently focus on that day still to come when we will receive all that God has in store for us. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that in the Christian life what we are to do is grounded in what you have done through Jesus, that how we're to live is grounded in the identity we have because of your great mercy and that has been gifted to us in the gospel.

Lord, we thank you for Jesus, for his perfect sacrifice in our place, the lamb without spot or blemish, that where we fall short, he lived the perfect life of perfect holiness.

[ 28 : 11 ] Lord, we thank you for his death that pays the penalty for our sin, that brings us into your family so that we can be your children now and for all eternity.

Lord, please help us to fix our thoughts upon that because that is the very best news in the whole world. Please help us to be diligent in that as we so easily lower our gaze.

And in light of that, Lord, please help us to live lives of holiness. Being holy as you, our heavenly father, is holy. Living out that family image as your children.

Lord, please help us repeatedly day by day to turn away from sin and instead to keep turning to you who loves us and with whom we will be for all eternity. Lord, we thank you that we can be secure in that even when we make mistakes, which we all will, because we know that we have been redeemed by the perfect blood of Jesus.

We ask that time and time again we would keep coming back to that sacrifice, that we would continue to know that we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, so that even when we stumble, we know that you lift us back up again, not just so that we can stumble again, but so that we can strive to live lives of holiness as your people in the world around us.

[ 29 : 30 ] We pray all of these things in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.