

Looking to a Future Inheritance

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[0 : 0 0] stretching right back into the time of the Bible and continuing today around the world. A Chinese minister recently described the state of the church in that country in relation to rising levels of government pressure, saying we are constantly on edge, but our faith has grown, and we are more determined than ever to see Christians in the area stand strong and not compromise their faith in Jesus.

I wonder if when we hear quotations like that, words like that, whether it's Jim Elliot, whether it's this Chinese pastor, we hear and we think, how can people be so bold?

How can people stand up to that kind of pressure? Or if you're not yet a Christian, you might well wonder, well, why would anyone choose to put themselves through that level of hardship?

Why would anyone choose that, a life constantly on edge? Why would anyone suffer rather than just taking the smoother path? I think the answer really to that why, and we're also going to see this morning, the answer to the how as well is the end of that Jim Elliot quote there, to gain what he cannot lose.

To gain what he cannot lose. It's focusing on that eternal, that future, that secure inheritance God promises to his people that keeps us going in the present, even as we find ourselves living as outsiders often in the world around us.

[1 : 3 1] And that's one of the big ideas in these verses that we're going to be digging into this morning. As Ross said, we're continuing our series in 1 Peter. We began that last week.

We're going to be looking at this letter right through to December and really get kind of stuck into it. So it is worth a bit of a recap as we begin with the opening two verses of the book last week.

And we saw that key concept there of the Christian's identity as an elect exile. And we see that there right in the first verse, if you just have a glance up.

That's what we were looking at. We spoke about how we have that incredible privilege of being what Peter calls elect. That God in his great mercy has chosen to rescue us through Jesus in order to be his people.

That only through Jesus we can be forgiven and brought into God's family, our Father in heaven. That our salvation is God's work from beginning to end.

[2 : 3 0] We spoke about how that brings us humility. And we saw also how that brings us great security. And we went on to say, well, we need that security because, as 1 Peter also tells us, as well as being elect, we are exiles.

Elect exiles. The world that we live in is not our true home. We're only passing through, as it were. Living as a Christian can often mean feeling like a bit of an outsider.

That, for us, is likely to look very different to how it looked for Jim Elliot in Ecuador or for the church today in China. But wherever we are in the world, God's people are exiles.

And that still involves paying a cost. Living as an exile is costly. And yet we were seeing how we do that secure in God's love for us as his elect.

So there's that big framework that we want to keep in mind as we dig into 1 Peter. Elect exiles. And this first chapter and a half, really, of the letter really digs in a little bit more to what that identity means.

[3 : 37] We're going to start off looking at that this morning. The verses that we're looking at do that in three different sections, really. And I think it's helpful to frame them, or Peter frames them, kind of looking forward, thinking about the present, and then also the past.

So that's going to be our kind of framework as we work through these verses this morning. Let's have a look at those. And the first thing, then, is this. Verses 3 to 5, we see here a hope in a future inheritance.

A hope in a future inheritance. As we just said, a big theme of 1 Peter of this letter is exile. Peter's introduced that letter by telling us that we are exiles, that we are not home.

And so it makes sense that he goes straight on in these early verses to make clear to us, well then, if we're not home, where is our home? That's what we see in these first verses.

Do have a look down at verses 3 and 4. It says, We're going to come back to that in just a minute. But then it goes on to say, Peter says that Christians have a heavenly inheritance.

[5 : 02] And that word inheritance is often used in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, speaking about the promised land, the home that God had for his people.

And Peter's saying here, then, that your home, your true home, is this heavenly inheritance. Your true home is in heaven, is still to come. How on earth can that be the case?

Well, we're told it's the case in verse 2, that we've been born again to that living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

That just as Jesus has new life, resurrection life, eternal life, so if our trust is in him, we have that new life. We have that forgiveness now.

And we share in the destination to which he leads us, what he has made possible, our heavenly home in the future. I saw a picture this week of Cristiano Ronaldo and his young children.

[6 : 05] He's got a new YouTube channel, which I'm sure will be lots of videos of him, I would imagine. But he was there with his family. Finally, it's fair to say those young children are unlikely to be struggling financially in the future, I would say.

And that's not because of anything they've done. But they're financially secure because they've been born into this incredibly privileged position due to their dad being the highest paid sports person in the world.

Really, that's the picture here that we want to get in mind. It's not because of what we've done, but because of what our heavenly father has done, because of being born again through the work of Jesus, that we, completely from God's mercy, completely from his work, have this incredible inheritance.

We can look forward to a perfect, eternal, heavenly home. That, Peter says, is our living hope. This hope in a future inheritance.

There's one more thing to say on this. So often, when we get to this word hope in the Bible, we want to clarify what that means, because it's often not the same as how we use it, perhaps, in our day-to-day lives.

[7 : 19] That in the Bible, hope is not a vague hope. Hope is not a kind of a wishy-washy thing. It's a certain hope. You've perhaps heard me say that up at the front here before.

And this passage really kind of highlights, underlines that, doesn't it? This inheritance, verse 4, is imperishable, is undefiled, is unfading, is kept in heaven for you.

And not only that, but Peter goes on to say, verse 5, you who, by God's power, are being guarded through faith. This inheritance is being kept for us, and we, through faith, are being kept for it.

And so hope in that inheritance is a certain hope. And again, we're back, aren't we, to this idea of certainty, this idea of security, that is such a big part of this letter that was introduced last week as part of the Christian's identity.

Here's the fact that there is nothing else other than this heavenly inheritance. There is nothing else that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading.

[8 : 29] Peter is urging us, keep on looking ahead to that. Keep on hoping in that, because it is so good, and it is social. And anything else pales into insignificance compared to it.

Nothing else can give us this living hope that we're all searching after. If our hope is in our physical selves, our bodies, our looks, and I'm not just talking about Instagram models or fitness fanatics here, but that temptation that we all have to be so anxious about, am I getting older?

Am I getting wrinkles? Am I going to stay healthy? What if I get ill? That kind of desire to escape from or to delay the fact that we are mortal beings, if our hope is in our physical nature, and for so many people it is, then by definition that is perishing.

That is a hope that is fading, that is aging rapidly. It's a tragedy that so many people, our world is training people to try and cling on to that hope of being forever young, and we're all susceptible to that.

But it's a tragedy because it's hoping in something that will fade. There's no other option. Sorry to put it to you. Yeah, but physically, we will age, we will fade, we will perish.

[9 : 53] Christians should be in light of that, in light of our eternal hope. People actually have the best birthday parties that celebrate the most because actually year by year, we're recognizing not as our hope fading, not as our hope getting more frail, but actually we're getting a year closer to that perfect and certain inheritance, that certain future hope that God has won for us through Jesus.

Another example, you might say, yeah, I'm hoping in the future, I'm hoping for that nice, comfortable retirement that I've been planning for and working so hard for.

Well, that's what's keeping me going, and when I reach that, then everything will be sweet. Again, the Bible's going to say that you've got to have something better than that.

That is not certain. Financial things go this way and that, perhaps even more starkly, you don't have any guarantee of being kept for that. Alex Ferguson tells the story of how his dad worked on the Glasgow shipyards all his life, worked incredibly hard to get to that point where he could retire.

He died a week later. I'm not saying this to bring us down or to be miserable, but just to make the point that we have to have that better hope.

[11 : 14] And not only do we have to have that, but we have got that. The world around us needs that better hope, and God has provided that for us. We can have that certain hope in a future inheritance, our heavenly home made possible through the work of Jesus.

Before we move on, what should our response then to that be? Well, that's verse 3, isn't it, where we began? Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's his mercy. It's his undeserved love shown to us in the gospel. That means we have this certain future hope in which, a certain future inheritance in which our hope is found.

And so we praise him. We give him the honor he deserves. Hallowed be your name, as we've just been saying. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he is the God who's rescued us.

He is the God who's given us this living hope. Often we're wanting to say, you know, how am I going to apply this passage into my life? What am I going to do? We'll see in just a minute that this does make all the difference in the present.

[12 : 19] We're going to see throughout this letter real practical examples of living as exiles. But it's also no surprise that the headline application here in this passage, right at the start of this book, it is praise to God, because the unshakable future inheritance he has provided for us is better than anything else.

The only hope we can truly build our lives on and so we live those lives, giving praise and honor and blessing to him. So hope in a future inheritance, that's the first thing we see here.

The second thing that we see then in these verses is joy in present suffering. Hope in a future inheritance, now joy in present suffering.

This is verses six down to nine. Verse six, in this, in this, that is in this future hope, this promised salvation, in this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

Paul's saying now that this future inheritance, this future home, being kept for us, as we are being kept for it, that looking ahead to that future, actually that that makes all the difference in the present.

[13 : 35] And what is the difference? Well, it's not that, you know, everything in the present will just be then a smooth road that will just coast through life. Peter says there will be, there will be various trials, but the transformation is that we can rejoice even in those trials, that we can rejoice in present suffering.

Now, now we want to be clear what this does and doesn't mean. And it doesn't mean that idea of, that we're perhaps kind of prone to in Scotland or the UK, of just putting a brave face at everything. Rejoicing in suffering is not the same as a stiff upper lip where we say, no, everything's fine.

No need to worry. Everything's great. Have a look at verse six. These are trials that grieve us. These are things that Peter says will happen in our lives that bring sorrow, that bring hardship.

We can be open about that. We're called to be open about that with each other. And yet still the Bible says that we're able to rejoice through that.

How could that possibly be the case? Well, it's because Peter says, in these trials, our faith is proven as genuine.

[14 : 48] And so have a quick look back up in verse five, where it tells us that by God's power, we're being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

It's through faith that God is keeping us. Now have a look at verse seven. It's the tested genuineness of our faith that these trials reveal so that we can rejoice.

It's as that faith holds, even in hard times, it's as that faith holds, even through tears, that we can rejoice because it reveals that that faith is the real deal.

That that faith is the faith through which God will keep us, will guard us to bring us to that eternal inheritance that we're looking forward to.

Keeping going through trials is kind of like the stamp of authenticity on our faith. I suppose it's like climbing on the end of a rope and if you take a big fall, that's probably not a particularly enjoyable thing.

[15 : 51] But actually, you can be delighted because it shows you that that rope works, that rope holds. You can move forward then with a kind of renewed confidence in that. Or Peter uses the illustration of how gold is tested by fire.

I don't own quite as much gold as I'd like or enough to be able to test this, but the idea is that when you put gold through the fire, that anything that is an impurity, anything that is not the real deal, that is not real gold, that all burns off.

And so you can know, you can be confident that the gold which has come through the fire is the real deal. It is the genuine article. I'm sure most of us would like a little bit more gold in our lives than we have.

That would be nice, wouldn't it, if we kind of got home from church and there was a big pile of gold bullion stacked up on the kitchen table like in the films and the cartoons, tested and pure with that stamp of authenticity.

I'm sure if we saw that, there would be some rejoicing in our homes. But Peter says actually, verse 7, that a tested and pure faith, a faith with that stamp of authenticity because it's come through hard times, that is actually something of even greater value.

[17 : 14] That is something all of us, if we are still walking with Jesus, can go home with today and celebrate, rejoice in. And so you tell someone that you're a Christian or you stand up for Christian value or belief that goes against what all your peers expect and you might get some stick or get some flack for that.

Or you don't kind of fiddle your time sheet or your billable hours at work as your boss would quite like you to and you feel perhaps their disappointment with you and you're not quite in the in crowd anymore.

Or you don't jump in and get involved with the latest gossip. You don't hear what's going on. You become slightly on the edge of things. All of those are trials.

All of those are the trials that come of being exiles, elect exiles. All of those are things that can grieve us. And yet Peter says we can rejoice in that because those trials are showing you, are giving you confidence that your faith is a genuine faith.

Not that it's an exam that you have to pass and if you pass, therefore God will reward you. But no, it's again, it's this stamp on that gold that is authenticating the faith that is there.

[18 : 32] And so we rejoice because that faith is like the kind of the hook that connects us to that perfect inheritance and will ensure that we make it to our eternal home.

And then verse 7 gives us another great picture into that. It's the same reason to rejoice in present suffering but seen from a different angle, I think, that that genuine faith, it says, may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Looking forward again, another brilliant reminder of what's to come, praise, glory, honour, and yet incredibly, that's not, in this case, that's not from us to God, but it's actually from him to us.

That's what awaits us in this perfect future inheritance. And so again, Peter says, we can rejoice now in the present, even and especially in tough times. Times when we really feel our places as exiles, being on the outside.

Times when that identity kind of comes back to bite and things start to hurt. Because actually, it's as we go through those that we're given this confidence that we will receive all these incredible blessings to come.

[19 : 43] We're not living for now, but for eternity and all that God has in store. All this is going to come, Peter reminds us. Not here and now, but when Jesus returns.

The one who, verse 8, who we love, the one who we can't now see, and yet still we believe in and rejoice in because he has secured this perfect future, meaning we can have this joy in the present.

Don't stand looking at your feet, says Peter. Don't be kind of wallowing in the misfortune that you feel. Don't be consumed by your present situation, but rather keep on looking forward, keep on looking up, keep on remembering what is in store for God's people and so that we can rejoice here and now in the present.

So I hope in a future inheritance that gives us joy in present suffering, Peter now looks back and we see thirdly, finally, we see him highlight in these verses the fulfillment of past promises.

And again, we're going to see how it's looking to the past, but in order to affect how we live, how we're able to respond in the present. Verses 10 to 12, it says, concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

[21 : 15] 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. Now, I'll be honest and maybe you'll be able to identify with me as I say this. I was kind of wrestling with these verses a little bit this week.

What's going on here? How do these fit into the flow of Peter's argument and what we've been looking at? But I think actually the idea is simply this. I was given a bit of help to get to this point.

But here it is. The fact is that for us to be able to sit here this morning and know all that we've just been talking about. That through Jesus' resurrection we've been born again.

To know that there is kept for us in heaven a perfect inheritance. To know that we have access to that through faith which is God's gift to us. To know that we can live in the present rejoicing in light of the future because we have a living hope, a certain hope, a resurrection hope.

[22 : 25] For us to be able to sit here and know that this morning and perhaps some of that will have been new to us. Perhaps some of that will be a reminder. Perhaps some of that will have been a different emphasis. But a lot of it will be stuff that we are aware of.

A lot of it will have been things that we speak regularly about at church. But to know the fulfillment of these truths Peter is saying is the greatest privilege there is.

That we stand in the present even though we are exiles. Even though we're not yet truly home. That we stand in the present right here, right now at a time of incredible privilege because we see this fulfillment of past promises.

It's as if we're no longer having to look at the map trying to work out where things would be or trying to make sense of those tiny little contour lines and think what would the lie of the land actually look like in real life.

Rather we have that great blessing of being able to stand on the top of the mountain and see it all unfolded in front of us. We have a far better view of God's plan of salvation and our incredibly privileged part in that than Isaiah had.

[23 : 39] Than Daniel had. Than any of these Old Testament prophets had. Even, incredibly Peter says, even than the angels had. It's this incredibly privileged position in which we stand.

So why does Peter bring this up here? I think again it's to serve that big purpose of so much of these opening verses to encourage us and to give us the security to keep on going as exiles.

We might feel pretty insignificant. We might feel quite on the periphery. Life as an exile is not a walk in the park. We're going to come back to that time and time and time again over these next few weeks and yet Peter is reminding us these things have been revealed to us.

Good news has been preached to us by the Holy Spirit himself. Things into which even angels have longed to look. So Christians might stand on the margins of society.

We might feel as if we're squeezed out of things. There might be hardship that comes because we make that conscious decision to live as an exile and yet we stand at the very heart of God's eternal plan for the universe.

[24 : 50] The identity we have through him is the greatest possible privilege. And so again we're able to be secure in that. We're able to rejoice in that.

And this plan is all centered on Jesus. Just as we close look at verse 11. It's the spirit of Christ who predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

Jesus' path went through the cross to glory. It's the cross through which we are rescued. It is the glory that perfect inheritance that he has made available to us.

And see how it's that pattern of Christ himself suffering and subsequent glory which is the exact same pattern for Christians that we've been seeing in these verses. Suffering with subsequent glory.

suffering with glory to come. It's just another way that again we can walk that path with security knowing that we've not gone off track but that that was Jesus' path.

[25 : 52] And we walk that path through trials but rejoicing knowing that that is the path that he is the one who will lead us to that perfect inheritance that praise and honor and glory at his return.

Getting our identity right really grasping what it means then to be elect exiles makes all the difference. It means looking to the future where our home truly is a perfect and secure inheritance that which as Jim Elliott says is that we can never lose and that makes all the difference now to how we live in the present.

It doesn't mean ease it doesn't mean comfort it means exile which involves trials and grief and yet incredibly it offers what nothing else in the universe can offer it means that we can rejoice through that knowing that better is to come as we follow that path of Jesus through suffering to glory because he has been there first as promised and predicted throughout the whole of the Old Testament those incredible promises fulfilled in him that we have the privilege of being part of and partaking in those blessings that God has laid out for us as his people elect exiles those who will go through the world facing trouble facing trials grieved and yet those who go through this world as God's chosen people living in light of the world to come and our imperishable inheritance when Jesus returns when we see him face to face and when we will be with him for all eternity let's pray together